SEEING OUR CALLING IN OUR CONTEXT:

ONE CHURCH'S JOURNEY

TOWARD CLARIFIED VISION

FOR GOSPEL FAITFHULNESS

A THESIS-PROJECT

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF

GORDON-CONWELL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

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MAY 2022

To Greta.

For walking faithfully with Jesus and with me.

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

This thesis-project traces one church's process of growing in both self-understanding and community awareness to the end of creating clarified ecclesiological vision unique to the context. Consideration of relevant biblical, academic, and practical literature establishes the validity of creation of a church-specific vision based on unique elements of congregational character and story as well as contextual realities. Santa Barbara Community Church (SBCC) serves as the landscape for the development and implementation of a tool known as the Vision Frame, adoption of which positions SBCC to live into a future with greater missional intentionality.

CHAPTER 1

THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING

Santa Barbara Community Church

On the third Sunday of September 1979, Santa Barbara Community Church (SBCC) began as a small group of friends who wanted to glorify God by gathering to read Scripture, worship together, and be involved in one another's lives in ways that extended beyond Sundays. After three weeks, SBCC relocated from the living room where it originated and began meeting in the back of a local restaurant and bar. Though some Christian fellowships would be scandalized by such a move, SBCC's embrace of its new location hinted at a willingness to innovate and adopt unconventional approaches to church life and ministry.

Beyond meeting in a bar, other signs of this innovative thinking were theological, some logistical, and some programmatic. Theologically, though broadly Reformed in conviction, SBCC has from its earliest days held that the office of Elder as well as pulpit preaching ministry were open to women. Not a common stance even today, at the time the approach was quite novel. Yet, church leadership believed, and maintains today, that this is a faithful interpretation and application of the New Testament's teaching on how members—regardless of gender—are expected to use their gifts in the local church.

As an example of innovative logistical thinking, consider both SBCC's commitment to shared leadership and its approach to meeting space. SBCC was planted and pastored for the subsequent 38 years by two biological brothers, Steve and Reed Jolley. Eschewing traditional hierarchies and role delineations, each brother functioned in his strengths and contributed his own style of pastoral ministry to the church's leadership culture. Contrasted with more common centralized or top-down approaches to ministry structure,

this shared leadership furthered the picture of SBCC as a place of innovation and fresh thinking.

Even as church membership increased—eventually outgrowing the bar after a year—rather than pursue a long-term location to call its own, leadership opted, instead, to rent and meet in other church buildings. The primary driver for this approach to church life was a commitment to pragmatic generosity. By not tying the church to a building and a mortgage, SBCC was able to give generously to kingdom work both close to home and around the world. This commitment required SBCC to gather in the afternoons once the owners had concluded their own worship services and had vacated the church building for the day. Over the course of the next 27 years, SBCC would meet together in the afternoon to worship in space owned by other church groups. Finally, in 2008, after nearly three decades spread across three different church meeting locations, SBCC merged with Trinity Baptist Church and, for the first time in its history, had a property to call its own. Yet, because the property and building that SBCC came to occupy were mortgage-free, the commitment to generosity remained intact even when the specific application of that commitment changed.

Finally, SBCC's innovative thinking and approach to ministry is evidenced in programmatic ways, as well. From the very beginning of church life together, leadership stressed what was referred to as "Every Member Ministry" over more traditional, centralized understandings of leadership and ministry. In essence, SBCC represented a place where ministry was broadly owned by the saints in the spirit of Ephesians 4. The prevailing mantra became, "If you want to lead or start a ministry that God has gifted you for and called you to, then do it!" This programmatic commitment allowed the church, as a

whole, to devote more attention to homegroups as its primary ministry model and to

protect against a crowded menu of ministry options. Homegroups, then, became the main

program offering of the church and decisions for additional ministry offerings were made

in light of their potential impact on homegroups. Again, such a streamlined approach to

ministry programming is distinct from some more common, program-heavy models of

ministry.

Over the last four decades, SBCC has grown and flourished and today is a large

church that—reflective of its earliest aspirations—enjoys a tradition of solid Bible teaching,

robust small groups, and deep reciprocal relationships within the church body. While

numbers do not paint the whole picture of a particular church's health, they can provide an

informative lens through which to look. Though specific figures for attendees on a

particular Sunday are hard to pinpoint, informed estimates place the total around 1,500

people on an average week.[1] SBCC is now a church family with vibrant children's and youth

ministries, close to 70 homegroups, and a well-rounded commitment to missions both

nearby and abroad.

Along with some obvious signs of health, however, are concerning indicators that

SBCC might have traded elements of its original innovative ethos for the mentalities and

practices of more traditional approaches to ministry. With age, SBCC appears to have

focused more predominantly on the shepherding and teaching functions of pastoral

ministry at the expense of intentional, evangelistic engagement with the surrounding

culture. With a well-honed approach to discipleship through homegroups at its

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1. Note that these are pre-pandemic estimates of in-person worship attendance based on known seating capacity of the primary worship facility as well as registration numbers in spaces such as children's and youth ministry.

programmatic core, the church appears, by and large, to be attracting established believers already motivated to grow in their faith. Data from a congregational survey conducted in December 2016 supports this suspicion. [2]

While the methodology and results of the survey data will be more thoroughly investigated in chapter 4, the overall thrust was clear: over the years, SBCC has become a church that appeals to and attracts Christian believers who desire to grow in their already-held faith. While there is certainly nothing wrong with a church ministering to Christians interested in furthering their discipleship, changing religious attitudes in America generally and the specific demographics of Santa Barbara combine to cast doubt on the sustainability of this approach.

A Post-Christian Context

In the 20th century, a significant shift was taking place in the general social landscape of the United States. Owing in large part to more deeply embedded Enlightenment rationalism and its almost-inevitable secular materialist worldview, Western societies were growing progressively less familiar with and tolerant of a Christian worldview built on the centrality of faith and the authority of Scripture. One result is that the Church—once considered a key societal pillar—has become increasingly marginalized in Western culture.

Applied to the United States, in particular, drawing upon demographic research detailing shifts in religious attitudes, practices, and perspectives within the general population, Reggie McNeal writes, "Underneath the semblance of an American culture

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2. Complete, non-sorted survey data can be found in Appendix A.

influenced by Christianity, the tectonic plates have shifted….The American culture no longer props up the church the way it did, no longer automatically accepts the church as a player at the table in public life, and can be downright hostile to the church's presence. The collapse I am detailing also involves the realization that values of classic Christianity no longer dominate the way Americans believe or behave."[3]

This cultural shift presents monumental challenges for churches accustomed to operating within the framework of what was known as Christendom, a cultural landscape summarized neatly by Tod Bolsinger as "the seventeen-hundred-year-long era with Christianity at the privileged center of Western cultural life."[4] As Timothy Keller details, Christendom allowed churches to focus narrowly.

> In the West during the time of Christendom, the church could afford to limit its discipleship and training of believers to prayer, Bible study, and evangelism because most Christians were not facing non-Christian values at work, in their neighborhoods, or at school. They did not need (or did not think they needed) to reflect deeply about a Christian approach to business, art, politics, the use of community resources, or race relations, to name a few examples.[5]

Exacerbating the challenge, Michael Frost argues, is that the Western church has been slow to respond to the changed reality. He writes, "Although the Christendom story no longer defines Western culture in general, it remains the primary definer of the church's self-understanding in almost every Western nation, including, and perhaps especially, the

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3. Reggie McNeal, *The Present Future: Six Tough Questions for the Church* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 5.

4. Tod Bolsinger, *Canoeing the Mountains: Christian Leadership in Uncharted Territory* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 11.

5. Timothy Keller, *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 330.

United States."[6] Missiologist Lesslie Newbigin aptly illustrates the challenge for churches in this new cultural situation.

> It is one thing to say, "The Church has always taught" or "The Bible teaches," if one is part of a culture which accepts these as authoritative. But it is quite a different thing to say these things in a culture which does not. If, in a modern society today, I say, "The Bible teaches," I will at once have to answer the question: "But why should I believe the Bible?" In this culture an appeal to the Bible is simply an expression of my personal choice of this particular authority among the many which I might choose from.[7]

The general religious shift detected in America on a broad scale is also evident in Santa Barbara, specifically. The Quadrennium Report draws from a variety of demographic sources and "provides a projection of likely religious beliefs, preferences and practices for a defined study area."[8] A January 2019 version of this report depicts the larger Santa Barbara area as largely unchurched.

This demographic trend does not bode well for a church such as SBCC which has fallen into ministry patterns well suited to strengthen already-held Christian faith. As Santa Barbara changes along with broader American culture, SBCC may find itself best positioned to minister to an ever-diminishing population. Rather than the comfortable and familiar ministry approaches of Christendom, churches in a post-Christian setting find themselves thrust into a missionary endeavor in their own host culture, necessitating reimagined approaches and ministry models. In the case of SBCC, such a new approach necessitated a new articulation of vision.

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6. Michael Frost, *Exiles: Living Missionally in a Post-Christian Culture* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2006), 5.

7. Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 39.

8. MissionInsite's "The Quadrennium Project Report" can be found in Appendix C.

Clarifying SBCC's Vision

One of the time-worn mottoes of SBCC leadership has been, "We're just trying to be the church." While this insider language may be appealing to those with ecclesiological background—and perhaps even baggage from other experiences of church and ministry—this articulation of the church's self-understanding does little to connect with a surrounding culture that is marked by indifference, suspicion, or outright hostility toward religion. In a departure from her earlier innovative roots, SBCC appears—with age and growth—to have settled into the ministry modalities more commonly associated with Christendom: primarily teaching and shepherding of already-interested Christians.

A lack of specific vision for gospel-driven encounter with culture has resulted in an under-emphasis on evangelism and equipping church members for missional engagement with nonbelievers in a predominantly never-churched environment. This has often led to a disconnect with a community that lives, largely, according to a secular, materialist worldview and rejects the notion that the church has anything of substance to offer, even in the face of trial or difficulty. Believers at SBCC have not traditionally been equipped to navigate this worldview gulf and the general approach of the membership appears to be a "trust it to the professionals" mentality of evangelism, rather than a personally-owned missional vision for impacting one's own community with the gospel.

This thesis project will trace the steps taken by senior-level leadership at SBCC to attempt to articulate and implement vision for gospel-centered encounter with our surrounding context. After a significant pastoral leadership transition following the departure of both founding pastors, the new leadership team worked to develop vision for SBCC that would propel it forward in making disciples in a changed cultural context. This

thesis will explore the purpose of such a process, the results of these efforts, the ways in which the clarified vision impacts and shapes current and future ministry approaches, and how it serves to position SBCC to respond appropriately to its post-Christian context.

The second chapter outlines the foundational theological framework that undergirds this thesis-project. Specifically, this chapter will consider the biblical picture of the church as a missionary enterprise from its inception and in its existential purpose. Through an examination of key biblical texts, this chapter will argue that missional engagement with the surrounding culture is innate to the church's self-understanding and, consequently, informs the way of being of a local church in the world. Secondly, this chapter will address the fundamental importance of vision-informed leadership for such a missional church enterprise to remain faithful to her calling. Engagement with key texts will highlight that such vision is not a modern innovation, but rather informed the ministry of the authors of the New Testament as well as the first generation of Apostolic church planters, evangelists, and pastors.

Chapter three of this thesis-project will consider relevant literature bearing on discussions of the shift away from Christendom and the rise of the missional church in response to these cultural shifts. It will examine the call for churches to engage in cultural exegesis and contextualization and to practice adaptive change in light of the discoveries brought about by such exegesis. Finally, it will detail the need for organizational culture and alignment around vision-driven approaches to ministry that arise out of a clearer understanding of how God has positioned a local church as a missional agent in its own context.

The fourth chapter will provide a detailed exploration of the tools and process that SBCC employed to adopt a specific vision-driven approach to ministry for SBCC, to invite input, to generate buy-in, and to craft an articulation of the resulting vision that would serve to unify the church family while catalyzing action for the future.

The fifth chapter will explore both immediate and long-term outcomes arising out of this work. Though many of the outcomes hoped for by church leadership lie well in the distant future, some short-term benefits are already clear and give promise for the future. A key short-term benefit of this vision work is to create greater alignment and clarity for various decision makers and stakeholders at SBCC (e.g. Elders, ministry staff). The articulation of a clarified and actionable vision will allow those in church leadership to assess both existing ministry commitments and new opportunities accordingly and make vision-informed decisions to bring greater ministry alignment. The long-term desire is that a clarified vision for SBCC that entails missional encounter with the surrounding culture will not only give the church a clear sense of God's leading in her midst, but will also position the church body for a role of immense missional effectiveness in a post-Christian community that leadership can imagine, by the grace of God and the empowerment of the Spirit, increasingly coming under the sway of the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER 2:

THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter explores one primary theme and a secondary theme that arises from it.

This chapter will primarily examine biblical ecclesiology with special attention to the

missionary mandate of Jesus for his disciples as central to the church's identity.

Secondarily, this chapter will address vision-driven leadership as an important

aspect of a local church's faithfulness to her existential identity and calling. A consideration

of key biblical texts will demonstrate that the Apostles given charge of shepherding the

earliest churches led from a vision-informed posture. Furthermore, it will become clear

that the church's fulfillment of the missional mandate levied by Jesus is greatly enhanced

by context-specific vision. For a local church—like SBCC—seeking to make intentionally

missional shifts in its operating values, a greater burden to see the church operating as a

redemptive agent in the world can only arise from greater understanding for how specific

vision for such redemptive engagement is innate to the church's existential purpose.

What is the Church?

With the words, "And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my

church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it" (Matt 16:18),[1] Jesus not only cast

vision for a new identity for one of his beloved disciples, he also introduced the concept of

"church" to the Christian vocabulary. The Greek term commonly and regularly translated as

"church" (ἐκκλησια) makes the first of its over 100 New Testament appearances here, in

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1. Unless otherwise noted, all biblical citations are from *The Holy Bible, New International Version*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011).

Christ's affirmation of Peter's confession and his promise to pioneer a new work in the wake of it. While the significance of Christ's five words "I will build my church" can hardly be overstated,[2] the exact nature of the church remains unaddressed at this point. Jesus has simply promised that he would build something. So, what did he promise to build?

The term ἐκκλησια was not a term pioneered by Jesus in Matthew 16. Rather, it already enjoyed wide usage by the time of Christ. The term's etymology points to "called out ones," and all uses of the term, whether biblical or extra-biblical, involve a subset of people culled from the larger populace.[3] As with other terms, this common word was appropriated by the early Christian movement and reinvested with new and richer meaning. Yet, fundamental to the term's essence is the concept of a people set apart, called out, or distinct.

Though helpful toward a clearer understanding of the concept of the church, a word study of ἐκκλησια does not give a comprehensive picture of the character, function, activity, or purpose of such a group. One easily could be left asking, "But called out to what end?" How one answers this question has significant implications for how a church imagines her calling in the world.

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2. See, for example, Lewis Sperry Chafer's *Systematic Theology*, in which the author contends, "Each of these five words is freighted with doctrinal import. If the phrase is repeated five times emphasizing a different word each time, the contribution each word makes to the whole will be noted." Accordingly, Chafer goes on to spell out the specific contribution of each word in Christ's promise. See Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, *volume 4: Ecclesiology and Eschatology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publishing, 1976), 43.

3. Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, rev. and ed. Frederick W. Danker, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), s.v. ἐκκλησια, 303-304.

The Mission of the Church in the Gospels and Acts

When Jesus recast Peter's identity as a pillar of the work that was to come, he used the verb οἰκοδομησω, translated as "I will build." Arising out of his atoning work on the cross, the scope of Jesus' redemptive work becomes clear as he casts vision for his disciples in the wake of his resurrection.

While Jesus' post-resurrection and pre-ascension interactions with his disciples are limited, a common theme can be detected in each, especially in the Synoptic Gospels. Matthew's gospel records what has come to be known as the Great Commission, in which Jesus charges his followers: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matt 28:18-20). The disputed longer ending of Mark's gospel includes the following command from Jesus to his disciples: "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation" (Mark 16:15).[4] Similarly, Luke's gospel records Jesus instructing his disciples: "Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, 'This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.'" (Lk 24:45-47).

Even John's gospel, which is clearly written with emphases different than the Synoptics and intended for a different audience, includes a brief post-resurrection promise from Jesus that could be included in the vein of missionary mandate. John relays that,

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4. This is not an argument for acceptance of the longer ending of Mark as original. Rather, the presence of a missionary mandate even in this disputed text highlights how the missionary calling was foundational to the early Jesus movement.

"Again Jesus said, 'Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.' And with that he breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven'" (John 20:21-23). This commissioning, of sorts, picks up on Jesus' prayer in John 17:18, "As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world."

The book of Acts paints a picture of how the earliest communities of Jesus followers began to live out the missionary mandate of the Gospels. The second volume in Luke's two-part work details the birth and multiplication of the church after the conclusion of Jesus' earthly ministry.[5]

In Acts 1:6-8, we read of a conversation in which Jesus challenges the narrow scope of the vision offered by the apostles.[6] "They gathered around him and asked him, 'Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?' He said to them: 'It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.'"

As Acts unfolds, the global mandates of Jesus begin to take prominence in the narrative action. Immediately following the arrival of the promised gift of the Holy Spirit, the Apostles begin speaking in a variety of languages that correspond to those spoken by the Jews gathered "from every nation under heaven" (Acts 2:5). The implications couldn't be clearer: the Jesus movement previously thought confined to Israel has global

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5. Though Acts is not one of the four Gospels, Luke himself attests to the unity of these two books and his authorial purpose in Luke 1:1-4 and Acts 1:1-2. Treating them together is justifiable in attempting to paint a picture of how the Apostles lived out the various commands and charges of Jesus to be found in the four Gospel accounts.

6. The stated referent of "they" and "them" in verses 6 and 7 has to be "the apostles" of verse 2.

consequences and blessings. Peter responds to the awe of those gathered for the feast of

Pentecost and delivers a sermon calling for repentance and identification with Jesus and his

redemptive work on the cross.

Standing at the rhetorical center of Peter's sermon in Acts 2:14-36 is the contention

that Christ's crucifixion and resurrection form the heart of God's salvific work in the world.

This redemptive story forms the center of the Christian narrative and, as such, is central to

the church's understanding of herself. Yet, as the narrative unfolds in Acts, it becomes clear

that the redemptive work of Christ is a story to be shared not only with the Jews, but with

the Gentile nations previously thought unworthy.

When the reader of Acts is first introduced to Saul of Tarsus, he is a zealous Jew,

intent on destroying the emerging Jesus movement. After his dramatic conversion,

however, God compels a Jesus-follower named Ananias to offer hospitality to Saul. When

Ananias expresses concern about the intentions of the fervent rabbi, Jesus tells him, "This

man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and to their kings and to

the people of Israel" (Acts 9:15). Saul, who would later become known as Paul, takes up the

global charge and undertakes the earliest missionary and church planting endeavors

among the Gentile nations.

The global missional disruption is not for Paul alone, though. Peter's understanding

of the wideness of God's invitation would be similarly challenged through direct revelation.

In Acts 10, Luke relays that, while in prayer, Peter receives a vision that he clearly

understands to indicate that God is undertaking a new work, one that will also include the

Gentiles. That these nations—previously understood to be outside of the redemptive

community and perhaps even beyond the reach of God's love—are now included in the

work that God is doing through Christ is hard for Peter to grasp. Yet, when Peter responds to the Lord's prompting and enters the home of a Gentile named Cornelius, he finds an audience eager to hear the message of salvation through Christ.

Luke writes,

> While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said, "Surely no one can stand in the way of their being baptized with water. They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have." So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days (Acts 10:44-48).

As with the conversion and commission of Paul before him, Peter's vision and subsequent witness of the Spirit's descent on Gentiles furthers the picture of the global scope and mission of the church in fulfillment of Jesus' commands. The remainder of the Book of Acts, in fact, betrays a mission-centric structure as the action can be seen to follow the concentric circles of witness outlined by Jesus as the gospel's message of redemption through Christ is made known "in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." That the book ends abruptly with Paul in Rome—the leading city of the as-then civilized world of the 1st century—lends credence to this interpretive structure.

The Mission of the Church in the Apostolic Imagination

That Christ stands at the center of the church's story is hardly surprising since the Lord placed himself at the center of both the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20) as well as the final charge to his disciples immediately prior to his ascension (Acts 1:7-8). The

church's message is a message about Jesus.[7] Yet, for too many contemporary churches, the

church's self-understanding and fundamental reason for being is disconnected from the

work of mission. Opting instead to adopt an insider focus that elevates ministry to those

already saved, the work of mission gets outsourced beyond the walls and even the people

of the church. The earliest Apostles knew no such distinction.

The example of the Apostle Paul is illustrative. Upon learning of the lordship of

Christ, Paul began immediately to relay to others the same good news that had so

reoriented his life (Acts 9:20-22). Such proclamational zeal marked Paul's life from then on

(e.g. Acts 16:6-10, 20:20-21; Rom 15:17-21). Yet, in the Apostle's view, his calling to make

known the glories of the gospel was not an individualized call, but a corporate summons. In

2 Corinthians 5, Paul employs a political metaphor to help the church to grasp her role in

the world, saying,

> Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the
> new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and
> gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself
> in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the
> message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God
> were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be
> reconciled to God (2 Cor 5:17-20).

The church, Paul contends, exists to make known the good news of Christ's

reconciling and redemptive work not only among the saved, but also among those not yet

reconciled.

Similarly, Peter urges the church to evidence the same concern for the life of the

world, urging, "live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing

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7. And not only her message, but her central acts of gathered worship as well. The rites of baptism
and the Lord's Supper are both explicitly Christocentric, meaning that the church is called to tell the story of
Christ at all times, whether gathered or scattered.

wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us" (1 Pet 2:12). It would appear, therefore, that a spirit of mission and evangelism is a key character trait of the church. As Peyton Jones puts it, "Jesus's perpetual marching orders of mission echo down through the centuries because we still haven't accomplished the goal of reaching the ends of the earth."[8]

Finally, the pages of the New Testament reveal that all that the church does in the world—from her acts of devotion toward one another, to the employment of the divinely-bestowed gifts, to the pursuit of her missionary identity—finds its proper motivation in the ever-expanding glory of God and the promised return of Christ (e.g. 1 Cor 1:7; Titus 2:11-14; 1 Pet 1:7-9, 4:12-13; Rev 5:9-13, 22:12-17). Because of her status as the dearly loved, blood bought and expectant people of God, the church waits not in contemplative isolation and inertia, but rather in grateful activity. When the glory of God properly captives the church, the mission of God properly animates the church.

The Church in Cultural and Historical Context

All theologies and biblical commitments must be worked and lived out in particular cultural and historical contexts and ecclesiology is no exception. While we can gain great insight from a biblical investigation into New Testament depictions and descriptions of the church, the particular ways in which any individual local church will embody the New Testament expectations will depend greatly upon the specific context in which God has placed it. The New Testament rarely offers direct commands about the gatherings of God's

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8. Peyton Jones, *Reaching the Unreached: Becoming Raiders of the Lost Art* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 17.

people, but rather gives vivid descriptions of how God's people are to be, leaving the specifics of application open to contextual application.

Presently, one of the key cultural trends in the West is the church's loss of social prominence. As Bolsinger describes it, "The statistics of the Western church's steady decline are well known…Spirituality has become wildly popular but so deeply individualistic that the fastest-growing 'religious affiliations' among those under thirty are 'none' and 'spiritual but not religious.'"[9] One reason for this perceived decline is the crumbling of Christendom, a society in which the church and broader culture are understood as intertwined and working toward shared goals and outcomes. Alan Hirsch elaborates,

> No one looking at the situation of the church today can say that over the last century or so things have not fundamentally changed. The reality we deal with is that after around 2,000 years of the gospel, we are on the decline in just about every Western context…Even America, for so long a bastion of a distinct and vigorous form of cultural Christendom, is now experiencing a society that is increasingly moving away from the church's sphere of influence and becoming genuinely neopagan.[10]

These are not mere subjective impressions, but concerns grounded in data. Citing demographic research, Jones writes, "80-85 percent of American churches are on the downside of their life cycle, thirty-five hundred to four thousand churches close each year, and the number of unchurched has almost doubled from 1990 to 2004."[11]

Though such cultural upheaval need not threaten the fundamental New Testament depiction of the church, for many, the church's loss of cultural prominence and centrality

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9. Tod Bolsinger, *Canoeing the Mountains: Christian Leadership in Uncharted Territory* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 28.

10. Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2006), 51.

11. Jones, *Reaching the Unreached*, 30.

represents a vocational and ecclesiological identity crisis. Yet, as Newbigin observed as

early as the 1950s, a growing rift between the church and culture presents a unique

opportunity for the church to engage in self-reflection and reassessment. In the face of the

breakdown of Christendom, Newbigin contends,

> A distinction had to be drawn between the Gospel and western culture, and this in
> turn meant that the Church, as the body which—in whatever cultural
> environment—lives by the Gospel alone, had to be distinguished from the society in
> which it was set…The Church was compelled more and more to define itself both in
> theory and in practice as a body distinct from the community as a whole, and
> therefore to reflect upon its own nature.[12]

Jones adds that this process of self-reflection is vitally important for the church to

remain true to her divine calling. "When we lose our ability to collectively examine

ourselves, we miss out on the necessary reexaminations, re-dresses, and rectifying work

that would ensure the Church stays the dynamic, radical, cutting-edge movement it was

designed to be."[13] In light of the shifting cultural realities and the church's loss of social

centrality, many leaders have called the church to a self-understanding more consistent

with the people of God in exile.[14]

Four specific reminders of the church's fundamental New Testament character seem

appropriate to the present reality for the church in America. First, the church is a people,

not an institution. For example, the manner in which "church" is used in Acts 5:11—"Great

fear seized the whole church"—cannot possibly refer to an institution, but rather must

speak of a group of people. Similarly, Paul uses categories of groups of people in 1

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12. Lesslie Newbigin, *The Household of God* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1953), 12.

13. Jones, *Reaching the Unreached*, 17.

14. See, for example, Frost, *Exiles*.

Corinthians 10:32, saying, "Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God." In this example, it is notable that Paul literarily pairs the church with Jews and Greeks, references that would have naturally been interpreted as referring to groups of people. Should he have conceived of the church as an institution rather than a people, he would have been expected to balance out his language with reference to the institutions of the Jews and Greeks rather than the people themselves.

The sustainability and viability of the church as an institution is of heightened importance in a Christendom world. Therefore, a key decision-making question becomes, "What will allow this institution to remain viable in this changed context?" In an exile context, however, institutional forms become malleable as the people of God adapt to new cultural realities. In an exile context, a key decision-making question becomes, "How are the people of God living out the mission of God, institutionally or otherwise?" As such, institutional forms will necessarily vary as the people of God are empowered for mission.

Accordingly, the second necessary reminder from the New Testament's vision of the church is that the ministry of the church lies with the people, not with the "professionals." In Ephesians 4, Paul makes this clear, indicating that those likely to be understood as professionals in a church context have been placed and gifted by God to further the ministry of those often described as "laity." He writes, "So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up" (Eph 4:11-12).

In a Christendom setting, the church played the role of purveyor of religious goods and services and placed the recognized and sanctioned church leaders at the top of an organizational pyramid, a pinnacle to which others had no hope of ascending. By contrast,

the exile context urgently requires all the people of God to play a role as the community attempts to "seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile" (Jer 29:7). God's command was delivered to all of the exiled Israelites in Babylon, not just the religious functionaries. Likewise, the church is to be a blessing in the context in which God has placed it and to do so requires that all of the people of God understand themselves as ministers, called and equipped to be a blessing.

A third key reminder from the New Testament picture of the church is that the work of the church takes place "on the way." As Christ told his disciples they would be his witnesses beginning in Jerusalem, so the church today must rekindle its imagination for how the Lord has already sovereignly placed them on mission in their day-to-day comings and goings.

In Acts 17, Paul insists that God "made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us." (Acts 17:26-27). For Christians, it is not hard to see how God's sovereign design allows for us to serve as ambassadors in our everyday lives. Missions, then, are not for a spiritually elite subgroup uniquely called to cross the ocean, but rather the good news of Christ's redemptive work is to be the story that all Christians tell in whatever context God has placed them.

Finally, the church in post-Christendom America would do well to heed the example of the earliest church and the apostolic witness when it comes to the centrality of Christ in the church's business. It is not difficult to imagine a wide menu of options available as a church works to "seek the peace and prosperity of the city." The church's distinctive

message, however, from the Day of Pentecost forward, has always been, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins" (Acts 2:38). To forsake the proclamation of the word that brings life and the message that alone can reconcile rebellious men and women to a loving God is for the church to lose her distinctive role in the world. Again, following the example of Peter, even in the context of exile, the church should insist, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12) and "We cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20).

These considerations, borne in mind and lived out with intentionality by the people of God, will help the church to press into that calling which John Stott describes so uniquely. "I have often said that we need more 'R.C.' churches, standing now not for Roman Catholic but for Radical Conservative churches—'conservative' in the sense that they conserve what Scripture plainly requires, but 'radical' in relation to that combination of tradition and convention which we call 'culture.' Scripture is unchangeable; culture is not."[15]

Vision-Driven Mission

Building on the picture of the church's "sent-ness" as drawn out of the Gospels, Acts and the New Testament epistles reveal a surprising amount of intentionality and specific vision that informed the work to make disciples of all nations. Perhaps the most obvious examples come from the life of the Apostle Paul.

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15. John Stott, *The Living Church* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 15.

Acts 13 relays the Lord's particular selection of Paul and Barnabas for a unique task. "While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off" (Acts 13:2-3). Notably, the work ahead is not specified in this passage, but it is clear to the church in Antioch which, after receiving this divine message, "sent them off." Years later, Paul himself would describe his understanding of the work that the Lord set him aside to do, saying, "It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation" (Rom 15:20).

Paul, then, viewed his life and his fulfillment of the calling God placed on his life through the lens of a very specific vision: to preach Christ where he was not previously known. To be sure, Paul fulfilled other responsibilities commonly associated with providing church leadership. The Scriptures undoubtedly detail his ministry of teaching, equipping, and strengthening believers as well as establishing leadership structures for the various churches he planted. Yet, by Paul's own confession, his driving vision was proclamation of the gospel in places previously unreached in order that worshipping communities could proliferate throughout the known world.

Paul's commitment to this vision is evident in Acts 16. After a successful season of ministry in the Galatian-region towns of Derbe and Lystra, when Paul and his team of evangelists "came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to" (Acts 16:7). Rather than allow this divine obstacle to derail his ministry, Paul leads his team to continue to the next city. Luke—now including himself in the narrative—records the subsequent events, saying, "During the night Paul had a vision

of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, 'Come over to Macedonia and help us.' After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them" (Acts 16:9-10). Though Paul might have been confused by the Lord's refusal to enable his plans in Mysia, he maintained a noticeable commitment to an overarching vision that allowed him to remain sensitive to the Spirit's leading when the opportunity arose to further his apostolic ambition in Macedonia.

One can draw a similar inference about the place of vision-driven leadership within the earliest church from the first congregational crisis to strike the fellowship of Jesus' people. In Acts 6, when a dispute erupted over inequitable distribution of food among widows, church leaders responded from a vision-informed framework. "So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, 'It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word'" (Acts 6:2-4). When facing difficulty, the decision-making lens for the Twelve was, noticeably, informed by vision.

For even the earliest Apostles, specific vision served to flesh out the more general call on all who are in Christ to "go and make disciples." Paul understood his role as one of frontier-evangelist-church-planter determined to avoid "building on someone else's foundation." For the leaders of the church in Jerusalem, that vision entailed faithfulness to "prayer and the ministry of the word" as one means of fulfillment of the Great Commission. The uniqueness of each lens points to an additional consideration of the nature of mission

that can be found in the New Testament's depiction of the churches started and led by the Apostles.

Contextually-Informed Mission

Although the church's missional nature is clear in the Scriptures, how each individual church is called and even equipped to carry out the common mandate is much less clear. Had the authors of the New Testament provided detailed prescriptions for how the church must fulfill her missional calling, the result would be a recognizable form that transcends history and location. Instead, the New Testament itself depicts the innovative work of church planting and leadership in dynamic and contextually-sensitive ways rather than in static and rigid forms.

The manner in which Paul lived out the ambition he stated in Romans 15:20 is noteworthy in that his evangelistic and church planting efforts as recorded in the Book of Acts were often uniquely nuanced to the realities of each context. Though utilizing a strategy of going first to the synagogue in hopes of persuading Jews in each city that Jesus was the Christ, the reader of Acts will quickly notice Paul's ministry dexterity on display. From location to location on his missionary journeys, Paul reveals a willingness to allow his context to inform his methods. Never is this clearer than in Acts 17.

At the start of the chapter, Paul and his traveling companions, Silas and Timothy, arrive in Thessalonica. Luke relays that, "As was his custom, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with [the Jews] from the Scriptures" (Acts 17:2). Though Paul's message found initial acceptance in Thessalonica, when virulent opposition broke out, he and his companions continued their mission in nearby Berea.

Luke asserts that "the Berean Jews were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica" (Acts 17:11) and when Paul presented in their synagogue, they responded with inquisitive hearts and dedication to the Scriptures. Yet, Paul's troubles were far from over as the opponents from Thessalonica turned up in Berea and fostered hostility to the apostolic work taking place. Again, Paul found himself on the move, this time to Athens.

A careful reader might expect that, upon arriving in Athens, Paul's methodology would be the same as in the prior two cities on this journey. And, to be certain, upon arriving in Athens, Luke indicates that "he reasoned in the synagogue with both Jews and God-fearing Greeks" (Acts 17:17). Yet, the balance of the chapter focuses not on Paul's appeals to Scripture in the synagogue, but to Paul's preaching acumen in the midst of a very different audience.

When pagan philosophers took notice of Paul's message, Luke writes, "they took him and brought him to a meeting of the Areopagus, where they said to him, 'May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? You are bringing some strange ideas to our ears, and we would like to know what they mean'" (Acts 17:19-20). When granted an audience with the gathered thinkers of the day to give an explanation of his teaching, Paul's approach was noticeably different than what is recorded of his interactions in the synagogues. Rather than making an appeal to the Scriptures, Paul connects his message to the existing belief structures of the community (17:22-23), argues from a shared theistic framework (17:24-27), builds cultural bridges by citing familiar extrabiblical sources (17:28), and deploys logic to call for a response and to point to Jesus (17:29-31). Paul's masterful sermon is presented without a single reference to the Old Testament Scriptures that he held dear and that, in other contexts, he readily cited, presented, and debated.

What accounts for this apparent change in methodology? Paul's commitment to his vision allowed him to maintain flexibility with regard to his approach based upon the context in which he found himself. Had his vision been tied to a specific way of utilizing the Scriptures to present Jesus as the Messiah, he likely would have enjoyed great success in contexts already familiar with the Jewish longing for Messiah. In less Scripturally-attuned locales, however, that specific approach would have gained less traction. Yet, because Paul's vision was clearly tied to mission rather than method, when he providentially found himself surrounded by idols in a city renowned for philosophical pursuit, Paul distinguished himself as an evangelist and ambassador of the kingdom of God.

What plays out in miniature in Acts 17 is evident throughout the remainder of the New Testament witness. The epistles that form the majority of the New Testament each read distinctly. The various authors of these Scriptures urged faithfulness to Jesus and the missional mandate in ways that uniquely conformed to the realities of each community. While Paul called the Corinthians to live according to the wisdom from heaven rather than the wisdom of the age for which Corinth prided itself (1 Cor 1:18-2:15), Peter's concern was to encourage those experiencing persecution to maintain a faithful witness (1 Pet 1:3-9, 2:9-12). Even as John encouraged self-sacrificial love that would validate the church's witness about Jesus (1 John 4:7-21), James wrote to encourage believers toward lives comprehensively shaped by faith in Christ (Jam 2:14-26).

Perhaps nowhere in the Scriptures is the varied application of shared vision more evident than in the messages of Christ to the churches of Revelation. Across two chapters, John records the words of the risen Jesus for seven churches of the ancient world. The churches—each in different contexts, facing different pressures and opportunities—

receive distinct commendations and challenges from Jesus based on their situations. Notably, each of these seven messages ends with the challenge, "Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches" (2:7, 2:11, 2:17, 2:29, 3:6, 3:13, 3:22), yet what the Spirit says to each about fulfilling its calling and remaining faithful to its purpose is clearly informed by contextual realities.

Throughout the New Testament resounds a clear calling for the church to be a missionary enterprise dedicated to making more and deeper disciples of Jesus. This impulse informed the thinking and the lives of the earliest communities of Christians and is evident through the Scriptures. Simultaneously, the New Testament has relatively little to say about strategy and tactics, creating space for broad application of the mandates and creative approaches to a shared commission. When viewed against the global scope of the mission to make disciples of all nations such innovative thinking can be seen as critical to the church's pursuit of faithfulness to her existential purpose and calling in the world.

Upon reflection, perhaps such missional flexibility comes as little surprise. The lack of strategic specificity in Jesus' promise in Matthew 16:18 and in his calling in passages like Matthew 28:18-20 creates for local churches both a posture of dependency on the work that Christ alone can do and a posture of innovation that is free to respond to the calling in a way that is sensitive to and informed by context and culture.

Conclusion

As the church in America ventures into new and unknown territory, a revitalized missional self-understanding is critical. If the church hopes to remain faithfully dedicated to the one who promised to build her, she must be relentlessly committed to fulfilling her

role as witnesses to those who have not yet heard the good news about Christ. For our Lord did not found the church with the calling to "be" but to "go." Therefore, the profound words of Jesus are her enduring mandate: "As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world" (Jn 17:20).

Yet, the God who delighted to bring all manner of creatures into being at the dawn of creation has also blessed his church with all manner of vision for fulfilling the shared calling to make disciples. No two approaches will be the same at every point. Instead, driven by Scriptural conviction, the giftedness within a particular faith community, and the opportunities and character of a specific context, each local church should strive to embody the timeless and universal call to mission in a unique manner.

CHAPTER 3:

LITERATURE REVIEW

If a church like SBCC is to live up to the privileged calling of being God's mission force in his beloved world, some deep questions must be asked, some deep truths confronted, and some deep transformations welcomed. Though founded with evident missional sensibilities, SBCC's more recent models of ministry have not always served to prepare the church for encountering a world that no longer shares its foundational assumptions, worldview, and commitments.

A Brave New World

Chapter 1 provided a brief glimpse at the changing religious context facing American church leaders, but much more could be said. Without question, the discipleship landscape in America has dramatically changed since the first Puritans arrived in the English colonies in the 17th century. Countless research studies have demonstrated an especially rapid shift in recent decades that has reshaped American religious thinking, voluntary religious affiliations, and the place of the Christian faith in the public square. Within the past decade alone, organizations as wide ranging as the Pew Research Center, [1] LifeWay Resources,[2] and the Hartford Institute for Religion Research,[3] as well as Nancy

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1. "America's Changing Religious Landscape," Pew Research Center, May 12, 2015, http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/.

2. "Unchurched Report," LifeWay Research, June 28, 2016, http://lifewayresearch.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/BGCE-Unchurched-Study-Final-Report-1_5_17.pdf.

3. "American Congregations 2015: Thriving and Surviving," Hartford Institute for Religion Research, accessed June 20, 2017, http://hirr.hartsem.edu/American-Congregations-2015.pdf.

Ammerman of Boston University[4] and Mark Chaves of Duke University[5] have all guided or funded studies that have added to the picture of the rapid change that can be discerned in the typical American congregation as well as in the typical American's views on religion.

The collective picture painted by the research is that American society and culture has largely moved on from Christendom. JR Woodward cites Alan Kreider's work to illuminate the realities of Christendom.

> Kreider identifies three common characteristics of Christendom: common belonging, common belief and common behavior. All the people were a part of both civil society *and* the church (*common belonging*). Infant baptism was the means of initiating children into Christian society….The state and the church were in bed together; the church legitimized the state, and state authorities provided resources and enforcement of religion….Religious and civil leaders affirmed orthodox Christianity (*common belief*). Religious education informed society of its beliefs, and heresy was not tolerated. Christian behavior was based on custom, Scripture, and the Ten Commandments (*common behavior*).[6]

Hirsch takes a more critical approach than Kreider, believing that Christendom uniquely destroyed some of the key identity markers and apostolic potential of the church. He adds his own defining features of Christendom, with particular focus on its negative ecclesiological implications.

> Christendom is marked by the following characteristics:
> 1. Its mode of engagement is attractional as opposed to missional/sending. It assumes a certain centrality of the church in relation to its surrounding culture.
> 2. A shift of focus to dedicated, sacred buildings/places of worship. The association of buildings with church fundamentally altered the way the church perceived itself. It became more static and institutional in form.
> 3. The emergence of an institutionally-recognized, professional clergy class acting primarily in a pastor-teacher mode.

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4. Nancy Ammerman, "The Reality Behind 'Spiritual, Not Religious," July 23, 2014, http://studyingcongregations.org/blog/ask-the-expert-the-reality-behind-spiritual-but-not-religious.

5. Mark Chaves, "Religious Congregations in 21st Century America," November 2015, http://www.soc.duke.edu/natcong/Docs/NCSIII_report_final.pdf.

6. JR Woodward, *Creating a Missional Culture: Equipping the Church for the Sake of the World* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 73-74, emphasis original.

4. The paradigm is also characterized by the institutionalization of grace in the form of sacraments administered by an institutionally authorized priesthood.[7]

Though the American experiment was birthed in a Christendom context, America is quickly approaching a post-Christian reality like that evident in contemporary Western Europe. Tim Chester and Steve Timmis draw on the work of Stuart Murray to define post-Christian "as 'the culture that emerges as the Christian faith loses coherence in a society that has been definitively shaped by the Christian story and as the institutions that have been developed to express Christian convictions decline in influence.'"[8]

Not surprisingly, the decline of Christendom is marked by a numerical decline among Americans who identify as Christian. According to research conducted by the Pew Research Center,

> Christians remain by far the largest religious group in the United States, but the Christian share of the population has declined markedly. [From 2007-2014], the percentage of adults who describe themselves as Christians has dropped from 78.4% to 70.6%....While the overall Christian share of the population has dropped in recent years, the number of Americans who do not identify with any religion has soared. Nearly 23% of all U.S. adults now say they are religiously unaffiliated, up from about 16% in 2007. While most of the unaffiliated describe themselves as having "no particular religion," a growing share say they are atheists or agnostics.[9]

Such shifts impact not only perspectives and attitudes, but actions, as well. Ed Stetzer and David Putman summarized early 2000s data from the Barna group, writing, "The number of unchurched has almost doubled from 1991 to 2004."[10] Quoting the Barna

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7. Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2006), 276.

8. Tim Chester and Steve Timmis, *Everyday Church: Gospel Communities on Mission* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 20.

9. Pew, "America's Changing Religious Landscape," 20.

10. Ed Stetzer and David Putman, *Breaking the Missional Code: Your Church Can Become a Missionary in Your Community* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 8.

study directly, they add, "Since 1991, the adult population in the United States has grown by 15%. During that same period, the number of adults who do not attend church has nearly doubled, rising from 39 million to 75 million—a 92% increase!"[11]

Chester and Timmis similarly draw on research to highlight the implications of the post-Christian shift on churchgoing practices. "Approximately eighty-five million people in the United States have no intention of attending a church service. In the United Kingdom it is forty million—70 percent of the population."[12] For churches born within a Christendom context and equipped for ministry within a framework based on its assumptions, the emerging post-Christian context poses a significant challenge. Local churches that—like SBCC—have focused on ministering to already-interested Christians and self-motivated disciples, may face existential concern as the number of people who fit those descriptors is on the decline.

New Context, Fresh Approaches

Reflecting on such widespread cultural change, Hirsch outlines the precarious situation facing 21st century Western churches: "After 1700 years of entrenched European formulations of church, we have to acknowledge that much of it simply no longer works; the maps don't fit the territories, and more importantly it does not fully square with the

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11. Stetzer and Putman, *Breaking the Missional Code*, 8-9.

12. Chester and Timmis, *Everyday Church*, 25.

New Testament. But mainly Christendom is just plain old obsolete because it was formulated for an entirely different set of conditions."[13]

Hirsch is simply building on the foundation laid by Newbigin decades earlier. Bolsinger writes of Newbigin, "After forty years as a missionary and bishop in India, Lesslie Newbigin retired and returned home to Great Britain in the 1970s. What he found in his beloved homeland was a more difficult mission field than he left behind."[14] Despite widespread nominal adherence to the Christian faith, Newbigin encountered a deeply post-Christian England. Drawing upon his experience as a front-line missionary, "Newbigin foresaw that the West was quickly becoming a mission field, and the church needed to 'develop a truly missionary encounter' with their friends and neighbors."[15] In his own words, Newbigin declared, "[Most thoughtful Christians] recognize that, with the radical secularization of Western culture, the churches are in a missionary situation in what was once Christendom."[16]

Chester and Timmis point out that the cultural sea change presents real challenges for the ministry models of churches birthed with Christendom assumptions.

> For all its vital rediscovery of gospel-centered theology, the Reformation in Europe did not lead to a recovery of gospel-centered mission by local churches. That is because the Reformers generally accepted the Christendom presupposition that Europe was Christian. To be born was to be born into the church. So the church's mission to the surrounding society was pastoral rather than evangelistic….Most of our current dominant models of church and evangelism are Christendom models.

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13. Alan Hirsch, *5Q: Reactivating the Original Intelligence and Capacity of the Body of Christ* (Atlanta, GA: 100Movement Publishing, 2017), xxiv.

14. Tod Bolsinger, *Canoeing the Mountains: Christian Leadership in Uncharted Territory* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 29.

15. Bolsinger, *Canoeing the Mountains*, 29.

16. Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 2.

This needs to change as we move to a post-Christendom and post-Christian context.[17]

How might contemporary church leaders rise above the limitations of their models to respond to the changed context? Many are finding a way forward in the adaptive leadership principles advanced by Ronald Heifetz, Alexander Grashow, and Marty Linsky. They define adaptive leadership as, "The practice of mobilizing people to tackle tough challenges and thrive."[18] Given the "tough challenges" faced by contemporary American churches, adaptive leadership may be precisely what is needed by church leaders desiring to lead faithfully in the complexity of change. According to Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, adaptive leadership is uniquely suited to conserving the good while pressing into something new. They contend, "Adaptive work demands three very tough, human tasks: figuring out what to conserve from past practices, figuring out what to discard from past practices, and inventing new ways that build from the best of the past."[19]

Focusing on churches, specifically, Craig Van Gelder highlights how such adaptive leadership has the potential to build the needed bridges for "the faith that was once for all entrusted to God's holy people" (Jude 3) to reach into the current post-Christian American context. "The church that is expressed as being catholic, as stated in the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed, is able to find expression *everywhere.* This same church, then, has the inherent ability to live *every place*, to become contextual within any and every setting. The

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17. Chester and Timmis, *Everyday Church,* 22-23.

18. Ronald Heifetz, Alexander Grashow, and Marty Linsky, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership* (Boston: Harvard Business Press, 2009), 14.

19. Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership*, 69.

church that is missionary by nature inherently seeks its contextuality—it seeks to become

responsive within and adaptive to every context in which it finds itself."[20]

Adaptive thinking allows church leaders to address their changed context in ways

that create congruence with what Kevin Ford terms a congregation's internal "code." He

explains,

> Every church has its own unique code that defines its identity and clarifies its
> focus….Code shapes traditions, values, and mission. Code is not usually rational.
> Most often it reveals itself indirectly and symbolically, through the myths, heroes,
> and stories that give a church its texture and flavor. Code, in fact, is most easily
> understood when things are out of alignment, when something isn't right. When
> code functions, it is almost invisible, like the air we breathe….Churches fail to change
> because they don't know who they are. Or they deny who they are and try to live in a
> way that is inconsistent with their code.[21]

The shift from Christendom creates adaptive challenges not merely in perspective

toward the emerging culture, but, in many cases, vocational and practical challenges for

ministry leaders themselves.

The Need for Specific Vision

Emerging out of the familiar cocoon of Christendom into the "adventure or die"

mentality of leadership in uncharted territory[22] will rarely be easy for existing churches

that have seen the ways of Christendom bear fruit in the past. Bolsinger is among those

who suggest that many pastoral and ministry leaders are unprepared for the task at hand

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20. Craig Van Gelder, *The Ministry of the Missional Church: A Community Led by the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007), 62, emphasis original.

21. Kevin G. Ford, *Transforming Church: Bringing Out the Good to Get to Great* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2008), 89.

22. See Bolsinger, *Canoeing the Mountains,* chapter 2 for more on the mentality shift needed for leadership in uncharted territory.

and that the manner in which most leaders are trained for the work of ministry compounds

the problem.

> To be sure, in the Christendom mental model under which most of us were trained, pastors weren't missionaries and churches weren't missions. (Indeed, my seminary had a separate school for that!) We were teachers, worship leaders and counselors. We were social workers, community organizers and program providers. We were mostly chaplains for a congregation within a Christendom culture.[23]

Elsewhere, he writes, "As pastors, we were trained to teach those who come on their

own, to care for those who call for help, to lead those who volunteer and to administer the

resources of those who willingly give and participate."[24] He continues,

> In a Christendom context the leader's primary responsibility was to bring a people back to God, returning to the church, turning back to the values they had strayed from. Preaching reiterated the shared story, the shared vision of life, the shared values of a culture they had once learned and now forgotten. It reminded us of what most in our culture already knew and even mostly believed.[25]

While planting a church with adaptive, missional DNA inevitably comes with its own

difficulties, Ford contends that, "An already established church seeking to change its

orientation from inward to outward is faced with an equally—if not more—daunting

challenge."[26]

Compelling vision, however, can serve as a powerful catalyst for initiating such

change among established congregations. Ford writes,

> Vision is the picture of a church's desired future, and it provides direction to that end. Vision is the answer to the question: If we were to accomplish our mission, what would this church and our community look like? Vision emerges from mission.

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23. Bolsinger, *Canoeing the Mountains*, 39.

24. Bolsinger, *Canoeing the Mountains,* 28.

25. Bolsinger, *Canoeing the Mountains*, 37.

26. Ford, *Transforming Church*, 185.

Once a church has a clear, compelling mission and a picture of the future, it can then develop a handful of focused strategies to begin moving toward the vision.[27]

Will Mancini argues that vision for the "desired future" is innate to God and to his image bearers. As a result, church leaders ought to be leading the way in spelling out compelling vision for where God might want to take his people by his Spirit. He contends, however, that, "churches today miss their potential not because they lack vision but because they embrace a lesser kind of vision, unaware of doing so. That lesser vision is a *generic* one."[28]

By contrast, he insists that a specific vision is vital for leaders of local churches. He writes, "Being a visionary means living free, free to give yourself *to* something and freedom *from* everything else. And not giving yourself to the gospel and God or ministry generally but in a specific way—in your place and time, with your gifts, your people, and the passions you wield, together."[29] In Acts 17:24-28, the Apostle Paul uses similar language to describe God's sovereign work in setting up societies and cultures.

Mancini also sees the gift of visionary clarity resulting in people enjoying greater engagement with God's work through their local church in the specific local context where God has placed them. "Do you really want to inspire people? Don't flood your church with more programs and events. Rather, blow their minds with new context….Disrupt the casual

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27. Ford, *Transforming Church*, 190.

28. Will Mancini, *God Dreams: 12 Vision Templates for Finding and Focusing Your Church's Future* (Nashville: B&H, 2016), 13, emphasis original.

29. Mancini, *God Dreams*, 223, emphasis original.

week-to-week worship routine with a real, visible, and dramatic picture of the specific

difference your church will make ten years from now."[30]

Stetzer and Putman contend, additionally, that clarity of vision is a key way to

ensure that churches remain vitally connected to their missional identity and Great

Commission calling. They write,

> Every church must find its unique call and vision. Not every church is called to reach the same people, worship using the same music, attract the same people, and appreciate the same values. For most churches this happens accidentally. The church takes on the character of its people—and in the process it often distances itself from the community. Churches that break the [missional] code seek to communicate the Word and connect through worship with local people and culture. This takes place as they enact God's vision for their local church. In the process, they develop a unique vision for their church that both honors God and connects with their community.[31]

For Van Gelder, the role of vision is specifically tied to the important work of

cultural exegesis. He offers that, "Vision has to do with how a congregation discerns the

Spirit's leading into the future. Whereas Spirit-led congregations look to the *Bible* to define

their *purpose,* they look to their *context* to discern their *vision.* Vision in a congregation is a

Spirit-led discernment process of coming to a shared understanding of what God is doing

and what God intends to do in its particular context."[32]

The process of adaptive leadership, beginning with accurate cultural and biblical

exegesis, can position a church to remain faithful to the gospel while expressing the faith in

new ways more likely to resonate in a changed context. According to Bolsinger adaptive

leadership is, in fact, critical to such an endeavor. He writes, "At the core of adaptive work

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30. Mancini, *God Dreams*, 37.

31. Stetzer and Putman, *Breaking the Missional Code*, 27.

32. Van Gelder, *The Ministry of the Missional Church*, 147, emphasis original.

is clarifying what is precious, elemental—even essential—to the identity of an organization. The core ideology of any group functions as both a charter and an identity statement. *This is who we are*, we say. If we stop being about this, we stop being."[33] And, later, he writes, "When a leader and a people together resist the anxiety that would lead to throwing in the towel or relying on the quick fix, but instead look more deeply— recommitting to core values, reframing strategy and relying on learning—this enables them to gain the just-in-time experience to keep the expedition going."[34]

The need for compelling vision to bring about needed change is heightened for two reasons: naturally arising dedication to the status quo and fear of loss. On the former topic, Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky insist, "Any social system (including an organization or a country or a family) is the way it is because the people in the system (at least those individuals with the most leverage) want it that way….Enough important people like the situation exactly as it is, whatever they may say about it, or it would not be the way it is."[35] Bolsinger adds, "Systems seek to secure the status quo, to experience and maintain equilibrium. Families, companies, organizations and congregations are wired for homeostasis. The emotional processes, ways of relating and being, decision making, symbols, values and other parts of the organizational culture naturally work together to *keep things the same.*"[36]

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33. Bolsinger, *Canoeing the Mountains*, 94, emphasis original.

34. Bolsinger, *Canoeing the Mountains*, 98.

35. Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership*, 17.

36. Bolsinger, *Canoeing the Mountains,* 12, emphasis original.

The pastoral leader who discerns the need for the church to alter ecclesiological attitudes and approaches in the light of the rise of a new cultural context regards equilibrium as fatal. Yet, in light of the investment of various stakeholders in "the way things are," challenge to the status quo becomes a potentially costly enterprise for the leader willing to engage. Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky insist that, "When leading adaptive change, you will be courting resistance by stirring the pot, upsetting the status quo, and creating disequilibrium."[37] Peter Steinke observes, "When challenging, leaders will surely kick up the dust of anxiety, since resistance is a natural reaction to challenge. Resisters essentially say, 'Let us be content in our homeostatic world.' A leader has to expect people to raise opposition when the community is resting comfortably, and then it is pushed, pulled, or stretched."[38] The reason for such opposition is the reality that change is always accompanied by loss.

Bolsinger writes, "Growth, transformation and adaptation always means *loss. Change is loss. And even experimental changes signal loud and clear that change—and loss—is coming.*"[39] Ford illustrates the tension when change comes to a beloved institution such as a local church. "When I sit down with church leaders to [discuss resistance to change], they often scratch their heads and say, 'Yeah, why is it that people don't want to change?' And my response is always the same. I tell them I have never heard a person say, 'I

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37. Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership*, 44.

38. Peter L. Steinke, *Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times: Being Calm and Courageous No Matter What* (Lanham, MD: The Alban Institute, 2006), 73.

39. Bolsinger, *Canoeing the Mountains*, 121-122, emphasis original.

am unwilling to change.' Then I add that I frequently hear, 'Just don't ask me to give up things that are important to me.'"[40]

And beyond dealing with mere preferences, adaptive leadership will always surface competing values, adding to the difficulty of making leadership decisions. "What makes adaptation complicated is that it involves deciding what is so essential that it must be preserved going forward and what of all that you value can be left behind. Those are hard choices because they involve both protecting what is most important to you and bidding adieu to something you previously held dear."[41] Furthermore, adaptive change will most often result in the loss of beloved forms in pursuit of higher values. Once again drawing on the imagery of "code," Ford points out, "To preserve the code, you often have to crush former expressions of code that are mutating into mere symbols. Relevance is about rediscovering code and applying it in new ways and forms."[42]

Again, the unique contribution of adaptive leadership—which seeks to bring the best of an organization's past into the changed future in a way consistent with its internal code—is underscored. While change always brings loss and humans and the systems they create typically avoid loss, Ford writes that it is particularly the case that, "people will resist change when decisions don't align with the code."[43]

The need for compelling vision as the church departs Christendom is highlighted by Chester and Timmis. "Being on the margins is a normal Christian experience. Christendom

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40. Ford, *Transforming Church,* 203.

41. Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership*, *45.*

42. Ford, *Transforming Church*, 207.

43. Ford, *Transforming Church*, 91.

was the aberration. Rather than assume that we should have a voice in the media or on Main Street, we need to regain the sense that anything other than persecution is an expected bonus."[44] Without compelling vision pulling a congregation forward for the sake of missional faithfulness, it is unlikely that a church will willingly adopt such a posture and mentality of welcoming marginalization.

It is equally clear that to migrate out of Christendom mentalities into a truly missionary encounter with the surrounding culture, the entire system that comprises a church must be aligned around the compelling vision of the future.

The Vision-Aligned Organization

According to Patrick Lencioni, "An organization has *integrity*—is healthy—when it is whole, consistent, and complete, that is, when its management, operations, strategy, and culture fit together and make sense."[45] In other words, health is predicated on alignment. Lencioni goes on to say that, "Within the context of making an organization healthy, alignment is about creating so much clarity that there is as little room as possible for confusion, disorder, and infighting to set in."[46]

In this case, what is true in business holds true in the realm of church ministry. As Lencioni suggests, alignment cannot be achieved apart from clear vision. Bolsinger contends that, "The *focused, shared, missional purpose* of the church or organization will trump every other competing value. It's more important than my preferences or personal

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44. Chester and Timmis, *Everyday Church*, 35.

45. Patrick Lencioni, *The Advantage: Why Organizational Health Trumps Everything Else in Business* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2012), 5, emphasis original.

46. Lencioni, *The Advantage*, 73-74.

desire. It's more critical than my leadership style, experience or past success. It's the grid by which we evaluate every other element in the church."[47] Stetzer and Putman insist that this is especially true for a congregation desiring to play a role in God's redemptive mission in the world. They write, "It is important that the church not simply have an evangelism component or strategy, but, sees herself as God's missional agent in the world, bringing life and community transformation. It is in this context that the vision becomes one of fulfilling the Great Commission. Every process, program, and strategy becomes part of what it means to be God's missionary agent to the world."[48]

Undoubtedly, it is not enough to simply cast vision for a congregation since the goal is not mere communication of vision but rather participation in the vision. Scot McKnight, reflecting on the role of pastors as culture creators, states, "A pastor is a leader who, on the basis of either giftedness or position and example, nurtures a Christlike culture, seeking wisdom from appropriate sources and inspiring and motivating congregants by vision, preaching, teaching, and example to participate in that culture."[49] Once congregants are participating in the sought-after culture, then the pastor has accomplished the work of nurturing the culture.

If congregational embodiment of vision is the end game of pastoral culture making, then attention must be given to the ways that the varying structures that define and shape congregational life contribute to furthering the vision. McKnight posits a dynamic in which culture emerges from the integration of four elements: the pastor/pastors and leaders; the

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47. Bolsinger, *Canoeing the Mountains,* 125, emphasis original.

48. Stetzer and Putman, *Breaking the Missional Code*, 145.

49. Scot McKnight, *Pastor Paul: Nurturing a Culture of Christoformity in the Church* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2019), 26.

congregation; relationships; and policies, structure, and systems. On the final element, he comments, "The structures, policies, and systems that churches establish and then indwell are not removed from these relationships; they are expressions of [the other three elements]."[50] Therefore, for the pastoral leader attempting to shift a church's existing culture, culture creation and shift will be incomplete until even the structures, policies, and systems reflect the desired culture.

Van Gelder refers to a church's "infrastructure," and writes, "One important dimension of infrastructure is *program.* Program represents the organized ways in which the core missional principles are carried out in a congregation's ministry."[51] As already noted, such programmatic alignment may prove easier for church plants than for established churches more fluent in the methodologies of Christendom, yet such alignment is crucial for existing churches should they wish to embed new vision in ways that go beyond mere sloganeering.

To reiterate, even in considerations of structure, vision remains primary. As Kevin Ford and James Osterhaus contend, "Churches that are thriving in today's context are typically the ones that are driven by core ideology, rather than by structure, and they continually align their processes and structures to that core ideology."[52] Shelley Trebesch adds, "Structure must flow from the organization's mission and vision and embody the core

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50. McKnight, *Pastor Paul*, 8.

51. Van Gelder, *The Ministry of the Missional Church*, 149, emphasis original.

52. Kevin Graham Ford and James P. Osterhaus, *The Secret Sauce: Creating a Winning Culture* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 94.

values. Conversations about structure or structural change should always be in reference to the mission, vision and values."[53]

Churches that are driven by structure typically embrace equilibrium as maintenance and perpetuation of the structure become the vision. Alternatively, churches driven by vision will organize every aspect of ministry and congregational life toward furthering the vision. Therefore, while structures play a vital role in vision support, they remain subservient to vision. At times, the subservient role of programmatic elements will come to the fore as the pursuit of vision highlights the need for intentional decision-making regarding changing or even eliminating elements of structure.

A clarified vision, therefore, is indispensable for the church engaged in organizational alignment work. Once vision is clearly articulated, the hard work of evaluation can begin.

Lencioni cautions, "Many leadership teams struggle with not wanting to walk away from opportunities that seem basically good and easily justifiable outside the context of having a strategy, but which would distract the organization and pull it away from its stated intent."[54] How can church leaders combat such drift? Trebesch offers organization development as a method for ensuring alignment around vision. She writes, "Organization development is the continual practice of reflection, research, evaluation and change in order to efficiently and effectively accomplish the mission and vision and ensure that each member flourishes."[55]

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53. Shelley G. Trebesch, *Made to Flourish: Beyond Quick Fixes to a Thriving Organization* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2015), 134-135.

54. Lencioni, *The Advantage,* 117.

55. Trebesch, *Made to Flourish*, 80.

Drawing from the work of Osterhaus, Jurkowski, and Hahn, Bolsinger offers a series

of questions designed to guide church leaders through the often-difficult process of

identifying needed change. He suggests that leaders ask,

> What furthers the mission?
> What principles are at stake here?
> What values are we expressing?
> What pain must we endure?
> How will we support those who are experiencing loss?

Then he adds, "Notice that while these questions take seriously the personal

experience, pain and loss a decision will make, the decision itself is entirely focused on the

first question, What furthers the mission? *A healthy system makes decisions that further the*

mission. Perhaps the hardest truth to swallow for most Christian leaders trying to lead

change is this: *You must choose principles over personal need.*"[56]

To gain clarity on the elements of organizational structure that may require change

or even elimination for more fidelity to the vision, Trebesch recommends a process known

as a function audit. But, like Bolsinger, Trebesch insists that loss is inherent to change. She

warns, "[A] function audit…may reveal, however, significant problems, strategies or

operations that need to be changed or entirely eliminated so that the mission and vision

can be achieved more effectively. When that happens, it usually means loss for someone.

And loss can feel threatening even when everyone agrees the change should happen."[57]

While affirming the often-unwelcome costliness of even the most needed change,

Ford also highlights the high cost of inactivity. He writes, "Change is necessary to stay

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56. Bolsinger, *Canoeing the Mountains,* 179, emphasis original.

57. Trebesch, *Made to Flourish*, 90.

relevant, and change is painful….A church must learn to live out its core values and mission in an ever-changing context. If it doesn't, it dies or falls into irrelevance."[58]

The difficult decision-making that arises from processes of self-reflection and refinement is only one aspect of creating alignment. Additional work must be done to create broad buy-in and alignment among various organizational stakeholders.

Alan Roxburgh and Scott Boren treat the important topic of aligning an existing church board around the development of a new direction and argue that for true culture change to take place within a congregation, the church board's influence cannot be minimized. Dealing specifically with missional change, Roxburgh and Boren highlight the critical nature of board alignment, writing, "Unless the board enters the [missional change] processes, it is impossible to diffuse missional change through the church so that it becomes an essential part of its life."[59] They contend this change process is best introduced to a board by utilizing "experiments" that allow for innovation without indicating long-term investment and allow for evaluation.

Board alignment is central to organizational alignment. The urgency of board alignment is highlighted by John Kotter, "How does culture change? A powerful person at the top, or a large enough group from anywhere in the organization, decides the old ways are not working, figures out a change vision, starts acting differently, and enlists others to act differently."[60] In most churches, the "powerful person at the top" is, in fact, a group of people serving on the board. Their alignment with the vision is critical.

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58. Ford, *Transforming Church,* 208.

59. Alan J. Roxburgh and M. Scott Boren, *Introducing the Missional Church: What It Is, Why It Matters, How to Become One* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2009), 174-175.

60. Quoted in Bolsinger, *Canoeing the Mountains*, 80.

Yet, in developed churches, the board is only one group of stakeholders who deserve particular consideration when it comes to alignment. Leaders—those who see themselves as invested not only in a church community but in the furtherance of its mission—also require intentional focus in the process of introducing change and creating alignment. When it comes to aligning leaders, as before, clarity of mission is paramount. Lencioni describes cohesive teams that are rallied around a clear objective. "On a cohesive team, leaders are not there simply to represent the departments that they lead and manage but rather to solve problems that stand in the way of achieving success for the whole organization."[61] Naturally, that can only take place in contexts in which "success for the whole organization" has been clearly defined in terms of vision.

This pursuit of the organization's highest good may, at times, come at a direct cost to areas of immediate influence or responsibility. Lencioni writes that leaders within vision-aligned organizations will, "readily offer up their departments' resources when it serves the greater good of the team."[62] This readiness to sublimate the perceived needs of a department in pursuit of a larger goal points to broad ownership of the vision. Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky add, "In an organization with a high capacity to adapt, people share responsibility for the larger organization's future in addition to their identification with specific roles and functions."[63]

The end goal of the often-challenging work of alignment is to see a vision for the church's future permeating the whole of a congregation's life together. Bolsinger offers a

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61. Lencioni, *The Advantage,* 123.

62. Lencioni, *The Advantage,* 123.

63. Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership,* 103.

potent reminder of the target, "If, as I define it, *leadership is energizing a community of people toward their own transformation in order to accomplish a shared mission in the face of a changing world*, then leadership is *always relational.* It is focused on a *community* of people who exist to accomplish a *shared* mission."[64]

The task at hand in the emerging post-Christian culture is too important to ignore and too volatile for the outmoded approaches of Christendom. Vision-driven churches that see themselves as a missionary force in the world and are willing to relentlessly align everything—from programs to people—around that vision are best poised to participate in the mission of God in bringing the good news of the gospel into the world. Yet, not everyone views the promise of vision as a wholly positive development.

Is Clarified Vision Unfaithful?

To be certain, not all church leaders and thinkers consider pursuit of the type of vision discussed here a path to greater gospel faithfulness. Some see, rather, a threat of drift from the essential message of the gospel.

For example, D.A. Carson writes,

> Western evangelicalism tends to run through cycles of fads. At the moment, books are pouring off the presses telling us how to plan for success, how "vision" consists in clearly articulated "ministry goals," how the knowledge of detailed profiles of our communities constitutes the key to successful outreach. I am not for a moment suggesting that there is nothing to be learned from such studies. But after a while one may perhaps be excused for marveling how many churches were planted by Paul and Whitefield and Wesley and Stanway and Judson without enjoying these advantages. Of course all of us need to understand the people to whom we minister, and all of us can benefit from small doses of such literature. But massive doses sooner or later dilute the gospel. Ever so subtly, we start to think that success more critically depends on thoughtful sociological analysis than on the gospel; Barna becomes more important than the Bible. We depend on plans, programs, vision

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64. Bolsinger, *Canoeing the Mountains,* 156, emphasis original.

statements—but somewhere along the way we have succumbed to the temptation to displace the foolishness of the cross with the wisdom of strategic planning. Again, I insist, my position is not a thinly veiled plea for obscurantism, for seat-of-the-pants ministry that plans nothing. Rather, I fear that the cross, without ever being disowned, is constantly in danger of being dismissed from the central place it must enjoy, by relatively peripheral insights that take on far too much weight.[65]

Jared Wilson seems to be working from a similar paradigm when he contends that the key to faithful witness in a post-Christian setting is to hold fast to the gospel in a manner that casts a suspicious eye at ecclesiological innovation. Rather than the church's conduct, Wilson centers in on the church's central message and seems to suggest that even if context changes, should the church simply tell the right story, the watching world will respond.

> The way we play with the shape of the church today arises from the worst kind of chronological snobbery—meaning, we assume both that the cultural context today is superior to the cultural context of yesterday, and that it actually ought to guide what we preach and teach. But the Spirit continually calls us back to the biblical portrait of the church and its gospel-centered parameters for ministry….*Semper reformanda* does not mean "always morphing." It does not mean that the church is ever changing, progressing into something better. In many respects, to be always reforming is to be always returning to the gospel. It is to be continually sloughing off the baggage of doctrinal add-ons and distractions, cutting out the ever-rising innovations, ecclesiological and otherwise….Let us return to the gospel, then. Let us abandon our visionary freedoms and run to the Father for his welcoming embrace.[66]

While this call sounds compelling, the so-called "gospel-centered" approach that Carson, Wilson, and others advocate for is not as straightforward as it appears. Sam Chan—in a book that Carson himself wrote the foreword to—argues that, "The gospel is not acultural, as if it hovers above culture and is devoid of any culture. Instead, the gospel is

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65. D.A. Carson, *The Cross and Christian Ministry: Leadership Lessons from 1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004), 25-26.

66. Jared C. Wilson, *The Prodigal Church: A Gentle Manifesto Against the Status Quo* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2015), 183-184.

deeply enculturated."[67] Later, he contends, "Saying, 'Just give them the gospel,' is too simplistic (at best) and naïve (at worst). If we are to present the gospel to someone, we need to be educated in cultural hermeneutics. We need to be able to exegete the Bible's culture, the culture we are seeking to reach, and our own culture."[68]

Newbigin—drawing on his first-hand experience of communicating the gospel and creating disciple-making communities among the unreached of India—counters that to suggest, as Carson and Wilson seem to, that there is one unfiltered or uncontextualized way to communicate the gospel divorced from cultural influence is to misunderstand both the nature of the gospel and the way that culture operates. He writes,

> It is important for a faithful doing of Christian theology that we should affirm and insist that the New Testament contains not one Christology but several. This is not an unfortunate defect to be regretted or concealed. It is, on the contrary, of the essence of the matter because it makes clear the fact that Christology is always to be done in via, at the interface between the gospel and the cultures it meets on its missionary journey. It is of the essence of the matter that Jesus was not concerned to leave as the fruit of his work a precise verbatim record of everything he said and did, but that he was concerned to create a community that would be bound to him in love and obedience, learn discipleship even in the midst of sin and error, and be his witnesses among all peoples. The varied Christologies to be discovered in the New Testament reflect the attempts of the community to say who Jesus is in the terms of the different cultures within which they bore witness to him.[69]

Though gospel-centered ministry and preaching are critical for shaping those who already are a part of the church, most missional church leaders seem less concerned with what happens "in here," as they do with the church's ability and willingness to identify with

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67. Sam Chan, *Evangelism in a Skeptical World: How to Make the Unbelievable News About Jesus More Believable* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018), 132.

68. Chan, *Evangelism in a Skeptical World*, 142.

69. Newbigin, *The Open Secret,* 156.

and minister to those "out there" as an expression of God's mission in the world.

Accordingly, for most missional leaders, the concern to respond to the changes in culture

with appropriate contextualization reveals not a drift from the gospel, but rather a deep

missionary longing to impact the world as it is, not as one might wish it to be.

Keller illustrates this impulse, saying that contextualization, "Is giving people *the*

Bible's answers, which they may not at all want to hear, *to questions about life* that people in

their particular time and place are asking, *in language and forms* they can comprehend, *and*

through appeals and arguments with force they can feel, even if they reject them."[70]

Warning against overadapting or underadapting to the culture, he continues, "If we fail to

adapt to the culture or if we fail to challenge the culture—if we under- or

overcontextualize—our ministry will be unfruitful because we have failed to contextualize

well."[71] Notice that in his detailing of contextualization, a missionary encounter with the

surrounding culture is primary in his thinking.

Such flexible and contextualized approaches find important warrant in the

methodologies demonstrated by the Apostle Paul. Drawing on examples from his church

planting ministry in Acts, missional church advocates Stetzer and Putman summarize,

> The apostle Paul began where the people he was speaking to were. For the Jews, the
> starting point was their ancient history rooted in the Old Testament Scriptures. On
> the other hand, Paul connected with the Greeks at their point of relevance. Notice
> that he presented Christ in both cases. For us, we may start in a different place, but
> the context of the message needs to be Christ and the fullness of Scripture. The key
> is where the communication begins. Scripture sets the agenda and shape of the
> message, but every message needs the question, "Why is this important to me/us?"

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70. Timothy Keller, *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012)*,* 89 emphasis original.

71. Keller, *Center Church*, 89.

If there is no point of connection, the message is simply meaningless facts rather than life-changing truth.[72]

Chan, focusing specifically on the topic of evangelism, illustrates the need for and value of cultural exegesis resulting in changed approaches. He writes, "[The gospel is] the same story—God's story—true for all people, at all times, in all places. But the Bible gives us different ways of explaining it to different audiences and different people. Each audience will have different existential entry points. Each audience will find a different aspect of the gospel that connects emotionally with them."[73] He goes on to demonstrate how cultural exegesis informs faithfulness in evangelistic methodology. Detailing varied ways to talk about sin, he argues,

> In the twentieth century, modern Western culture had more in common with the religious Jews in Acts. It was churched and familiar with the Scriptures. It believed in laws and absolutes. The guilt model worked well. But in the twenty-first century, the postmodern West is postchurched, post-reached, and post-Christian. It has more in common with the unreached pagan culture in Acts. And perhaps the shame model will work better.[74]

The need for faithful cultural exegesis undergirds his summary statement on utilizing multiple metaphors for sin and salvation when he writes,

> The Bible itself uses a wide range of metaphors, genres, and styles to present this gospel. Jesus and his apostles used a variety of presentations for their different audiences. We are also free to explore a variety of gospel presentations. We can use different gospel metaphors—freedom, adoption, peace, honor—looking for the one that will best connect with our audience existentially, emotionally, and culturally.[75]

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72. Stetzer and Putman, *Breaking the Missional Code,* 95.

73. Chan, *Evangelism in a Skeptical World*, 65.

74. Chan, *Evangelism in a Skeptical World*, 79.

75. Chan, *Evangelism in a Skeptical World*, 85.

While Carson and Wilson might respond that what Chan is calling for is precisely the kind of gospel-centeredness that they long to see characterize the church, the cultural learning and exegesis they seem to disdain is the very practice that allows Chan to suggest a variety of evangelistic avenues based on cultural attitudes and framework. Elsewhere Carson has shown himself to be an advocate of contextualization, making his stated hesitancy about the kind of cultural learning that might inform the process of contextualization quite surprising, if not inconsistent.

Another factor highlighting the need for clarified vision is that existing organizations are innately drawn toward preservation of the status quo. As a result, new approaches such as those needed by many established congregations who have diagnosed a lack of missional impulse rarely come about without clarified vision. Even proper cultural exegesis and understanding the narratives, longings, and worldview of a surrounding culture will not suffice to set a church back on mission. Ford writes, "Being missional must be intentional. There are too many powerful forces at work, both culturally and universally, to believe being missional will simply evolve over time….Over time, a church will naturally gravitate toward the cloister—separation, isolation, and exclusion."[76] Elsewhere, he contends, "[Healthy] churches exist for those on the outside. Reaching out to others is clearly one of God's primary purposes for the church. All organizations, however, tend to become inwardly focused and narcissistic over time."[77]

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76. Ford, *Transforming Church,* 187-188.

77. Ford, *Transforming Church*, 35-36.

Carson and Wilson have, at their heart, an admirable concern for the church's

faithfulness to her core message and her mission. Yet, in their concern for faithful praxis,

each undersells the radical change of context that drives those calling for innovative,

vision-driven approaches to gospel ministry. Carson's inclusion of the Apostle Paul in his

list of heroes for the vision-minimal approach is particularly surprising. Paul himself points

to his own impulse-restraining and activity-shaping vision in Romans 15:20, "It has always

been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be

building on someone else's foundation."

Ed Stetzer and Thom Rainer point out that the account of Paul's calling to Macedonia

in Acts 16 highlights the vision-driven nature of the Apostle's ministry.

> There was nothing random about where Paul, the missionary, chose to do his work
> for God....Paul's choice to go to Macedonia included another choice we seldom
> consider. It was a choice against going to Phrygia....Paul had a limited amount of
> hours, days, months, and years. He needed to invest in the right places. He could not
> go everywhere at once....He was clearly given an assignment and chose to obey.
> There was a place and time where God wanted Paul to go and do something. Why?
> God assigned Paul to Macedonia because there were specific people in whom God
> was working and for whom He had a greater plan.[78]

Perhaps the so-called "gospel-centered" movement represented by voices like

Carson and Wilson is not as opposed to contextualization and culturally-informed

approaches to ministry as the above selections suggest. Nonetheless, in their concern for

biblical rootedness, their suggestion of a dichotomy between informed cultural exegesis

and gospel faithfulness ultimately contributes to a diminishment of the church's missional

vitality.

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78. Ed Stetzer and Thom Rainer, *Transformational Church: Creating a New Scorecard for Congregations* (Nashville: B&H, 2010), 51-53.

Ford is unapologetically direct: "Unhealthy churches tend to define ministry as what happens inside the church (ushers, committee members, Sunday-school teachers, and greeters). Healthy churches define ministry in broader terms—ministering and glorifying God in their neighborhoods, workplaces, social circles, and schools."[79] If the church, like Carson and Wilson seem to recommend, adopts a rigid commitment to a perceived "undiluted gospel" with no regard for the manner in which the gospel's timeless message requires constant contextualization, the church is in danger of losing touch with the mission of God in the world.

Again, Newbigin adds a helpful reminder, "The idea that one can or could at any time separate out by some process of distillation a pure gospel unadulterated by any cultural accretions is an illusion….There can never be a culture-free gospel."[80] And as the culture in the West, generally, and America, in particular, changes rapidly, approaches to articulating the gospel must adapt, as well.

Conclusion

Leaders concerned about the status quo in the church in America and the specter of her coming demise have reasons for great confidence. Not only has Jesus made unassailable promises to build his church, but the tools are available to once again make the timeless truths of the gospel resonant in a society undergoing dramatic change. If leaders are willing to do the hard work of cultural exegesis, adaptive leadership, clarifying vision, and

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79. Ford, *Transforming Church*, 36.

80. Lesslie Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 4.

relentlessly working for alignment, the church can once again live into its original

ecclesiological mandate and become a missionary force in the emerging post-Christian

context.

A final, hopeful word on the purpose of missional vision comes from Newbigin.

> If the gospel is to challenge the public life in our society, if Christians are to occupy the "high ground" which they vacated in the noontime of "modernity," it will not be by forming a Christian political party, or by aggressive propaganda campaigns. Once again it has to be said that there can be no going back to the "Constantinian" era. It will only be by movements that begin with the local congregation in which the reality of the new creation is present, known, and experienced, and from which men and women will go into every sector of public life to claim it for Christ, to unmask the illusions which have remained hidden and to expose all areas of public life to the illumination of the gospel. But that will only happen as and when local congregations renounce an introverted concern for their own life, and recognize that they exist for the sake of those who are not members, as sign, instrument, and foretaste of God's redeeming grace for the whole life of society.[81]

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81. Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, 232-233.

CHAPTER 4:

DESIGNING SBCC'S VISION FRAME

While a consideration of Scripture and relevant literature may serve to establish the critical need for churches to adopt contextually-sensitive vision in order to maintain missional effectiveness, bringing about a renewed sense of vision in the context of an existing congregation is a complicated process. Yet, based on a longing for both a return to earlier ministry sensibilities and a future that features a relevant witness to an increasingly post-Christian community, SBCC leadership endeavored to do the arduous work of examining and refining her vision. And, it began with some needed introspection.

A survey conducted in December of 2016 employed quantitative research methods to assess the congregational self-perception of SBCC as it relates to themes of mission and discipleship. Responses to that survey indicated that SBCC was operating, primarily, from a discipleship framework that appealed to Christians rather than a missional framework that would allow for substantive inroads into an increasingly non-Christian culture. After a period of pastoral transition, these findings again became significant as the new leadership team sought to establish and communicate a specific vision for ministry in the years ahead. The articulation of a specific vision of God's leading into the future represents a new approach to ministry for SBCC and helps position this church family in strategic and intentional ways to proclaim the hope of the gospel in an unchurched context.

This chapter will provide a detailed exploration of the tools and process that SBCC employed to adopt a specific vision-driven approach to ministry for SBCC, to invite input, to generate buy-in, and to craft an articulation of the resulting vision that would serve to unify the church family while catalyzing action for the future.

Toward Clarified Vision

Though SBCC operated for years with the informal vision of "we are just trying to be the church," the operating vision was often murkier. While the mantra of "be the church" was intended to describe a simple and decentralized approach to ministry, the lack of clarity sometimes resulted in confusion. Which vision of "the church" was in mind at any moment was always open for interpretation and usually fell to the lead pastors and Elders to define, resulting in a leadership culture that was actually quite centralized. Furthermore, ministry staff and others in leadership positions would often discover the boundaries of this informal vision statement through corrective means, when opportunities, initiatives, or ministry directions pushed against the typically-unstated operative vision for what truly amounted to "being the church" at SBCC.

After a period of significant pastoral transition—involving the departure of both founding pastors in late 2018—a new pastoral leadership team was installed at SBCC. Because of the disruptive nature of the pastoral transition, many congregants and staff alike were left asking questions about the direction of the church. This context of uncertainty provided an opportunity to address the long-unaddressed issue of SBCC's unclear vision for her purpose in the world and role in the lives both of her members and her non-members in the surrounding community.

To begin to tackle the issue of vision, SBCC engaged a process known as the "Vision Frame." Built by Mancini and his team at Auxano, the Vision Frame process is intended to help churches clarify their vision by exploring what God is calling a local congregation to through the potent combination of its unique nature as a church, its unique setting in its community, and its unique calling by the Spirit of God to encounter its community in ways

true to its own character. Mancini spells out that vision when he writes, "What if [clarified, specific vision] of unique impact locally opened up a new appreciation for God's biggest story of redemption globally? It's not just about what happened in Acts 2. It's not just about what is happening with church-planting movements in faraway places like India. Rather, it includes what *our* local church is doing today, in *our* community, in *our* lifetime."[1]

A finalized Vision Frame serves to clarify a number of things for a local congregation and to catalyze action toward the vision of the future that God has laid on a church. Since it is built around the unique characteristics of a particular congregation set in a particular context, no two Vision Frames will be the same. For SBCC, greater clarity on the future would require increased awareness of the needs and opportunities in our surrounding community as well as greater self-awareness of our own congregation.

Toward Greater Community Awareness

While Santa Barbara is a well-known travel destination, as with any community, not all is as it might be portrayed in a vacation brochure. Those who call the Santa Barbara area home face a variety of challenges, some of which are uniquely connected to the context and, therefore, can help to form a church's sense of missional calling to the location where God has placed it. One central aspect of the Vision Frame process is unearthing what Mancini refers to as "the local predicament," that is, the unique need of a particular community.

SBCC's efforts to better ascertain our local predicament began by assembling a group of invested church members tasked with reaching out to people engaged with

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1. Will Mancini, *God Dreams: 12 Vision Templates for Finding and Focusing Your Church's Future* (Nashville: B&H, 2016), 36, emphasis original.

various sectors of community life or with topics of particular import in the area. The identified sectors were education, law enforcement, business, and real estate, and the special topics addressed were homelessness, mental health, environmentalism, and race and ethnic equity. We identified one of our staff members to spearhead these efforts and lead the group of volunteers that were conducting conversations with various community members and civic leaders.

The results of these efforts[2] revealed that though Santa Barbara enjoys an idealized reputation, for significant segments of the local population, the promises of paradise remain out of reach. Young families try to make a home in an increasingly inaccessible housing market. Temperate weather draws a large homeless population, which results in complications for other sectors of public life. Addiction and mental health issues are commonplace in a community marked by stress and elitism. Inequity of resources and opportunities along racial and ethnic lines contributes to deep divides within a population confined to limited geographic space.

In addition to the picture painted by the qualitative data derived from these community interviews, outside researchers have also contributed significant quantitative data on the Santa Barbara area. The aforementioned Quadrennium report, for example, speaks to the spiritual temperature of the region and compares regional responses against national averages. Santa Barbara emerges as a region that is spiritually less engaged than national averages. For example, the report details that responses indicate a higher-than-national-average percentage of people who identify as "nones" when questioned about

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2. Summarized findings from the "local predicament" efforts can be found in Appendix C.

their religious preference.[3] Additionally, the region features a lower-than-national-average percentage of people who consider faith to be significant to life.

A similar study conducted by the Barna research group in 2019 identified the greater Santa Barbara area as one of the 10 most post-Christian regions in the United States.[4] Barna researchers utilized a rubric that measured 16 criteria designed to illuminate "the core of what people actually believe and how they behave as a result of their belief."[5]

The picture that arises from the combination of SBCC's own investigation of the so-called local predicament and the insight gained from the Quadrennium Report and the Barna findings is startling. Santa Barbara, though often romanticized as a locale, not only has significant problems—some of which owe to the unique realities of the context itself—but also a significant portion of the people who live in the area increasingly don't view faith or religion as a reliable source for finding answers to the challenges they face, nor do they view faith as relevant to their daily lives.

The goal of such cultural exegesis is not merely a gain in sociological information. Rather, these learnings are invaluable for SBCC's efforts to gain greater clarity of vision for living out her missional identity in her immediate context. The end goal of recognizing the local predicament is the ability to identify what Mancini terms the "kingdom concept," that is, the intersection of how a community's needs meet with a church's unique character and

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3. See page 2 of the Quadrennium report, Appendix C.

4. "The Most Post-Christian Cities in America: 2019," Barna Group, June 5, 2019, https://www.barna.com/research/post-christian-cities-2019/.

5. Barna Group, "The Most Post-Christian Cities in America: 2019".

calling. To identify that, then, required SBCC leadership to apply similar approaches to ascertaining exactly what makes SBCC herself.

Toward Greater Congregational Self-Awareness

With the local predicament coming into greater focus, SBCC leadership now faced the daunting task of identifying the proverbial waters we swim in. For over four decades, SBCC has been a church with a strong sense of self, even if that sense of self largely remained unarticulated or investigated. Those who joined the church family—whether as congregants or in leadership positions—quickly discovered that SBCC has a "high-context culture"[6] in which there were certain ways of operating and living out church life that were not up for reimagination. Though Sarah Lanier includes age of a system as a characteristic of high-context cultures and even uses Southern California as an example of a low-context culture, SBCC's potent blend of deep relational connections, staff longevity, and a high concentration of people who have shared a significant portion of SBCC's lifespan together combine into an operative high-context culture despite the congregation's relative youth.

One result of SBCC's high-context culture is a general aversion to embrace new approaches or to consider opportunities for ministry that lie beyond the horizon of "who we are." Yet, because of the entrenched preference for "organic" ministry over against "organized" approaches to church life, much of the context that served as guardrails for the SBCC culture remained intentionally unarticulated. Naturally, the most surefire way to discover the context was to unknowingly push against it.

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6. See the brief but insightful discussion of high-context versus low-context cultures in Sarah A. Lanier, *Foreign to Familiar* (Hagerstown, MD: McDougal Press, 2000), 79-103.

This murky self-understanding presented a massive hurdle if SBCC was to rise to the gospel challenges presented by the local predicament. Clarified self-understanding, therefore, became a high priority in order to finalize and utilize the Vision Frame. A significant step in that process came in December of 2016.

Congregational Survey, December 2016

A survey was designed to aid in SBCC's self-understanding by asking a series of questions around the kind of person who has chosen to call SBCC their church home and what drew them to make that decision. Completed by 408 respondents who are either members or attendees of SBCC, the survey results indicate that SBCC consists almost completely of those who identify as Christians.[7] In fact, all 408 respondents to the survey responded, "Yes" to question 6, which asked, "Do you identify as a Christian?" While perhaps not surprising given the targeted distribution of the survey, the responses to the subsequent question are illuminating. Question 7 asked, "Prior to attending SBCC, did you identify as a Christian?," to which 390 respondents (95.82%) selected yes. Question 9, "Prior to attending SBCC, were you involved in another church?," furthers this picture with 90.17% of respondents choosing, "Yes."

An interesting trend emerges when the responses to question 7 are sorted by length of time attending SBCC. Just over 89% of those who have attended for over 25 years indicate that they were Christians prior to coming to SBCC, but the numbers take a steady

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7. Complete, non-sorted survey data can be found in Appendix A.

climb upward from there, concluding with 100% of the 115 respondents who have been at

SBCC for 0-4 years indicating that they identified as Christians prior to attending SBCC.[8]

Notably, question 10 asked those who indicated no prior church involvement what

motivated them to begin attending SBCC. One of the response options, "Curiosity about

spiritual things" garnered zero responses. Though perhaps challenging to how most

evangelical religious leaders might prefer to imagine the compelling nature of their work,

this may be a small indicator of the ways in which SBCC reflects broader cultural realities.

That the spiritually curious are not gravitating toward the church is perhaps, in the

bigger picture of American culture, not noteworthy. In a Pew Research Center study, only

13% of respondents indicated that they had "a great deal" of trust in religious leaders to act

in the best interest of the public, with an additional 39% indicating "a fair amount" of

trust.[9] Not surprisingly, the same study found "three-quarters of the religiously unaffiliated

(75%) have not too much or no confidence in religious leaders to act in the best interests of

the public. Fully half of atheists (50%) say they have no confidence in religious leaders to

act in the public interest." As religious non-affiliation grows in the broader American

culture, churches and their leaders are less likely to be viewed as trustworthy authorities,

indicating that the spiritually curious are likely to seek other sources of authority to satisfy

a spiritual quest.

Questions 18 through 20 of the survey help to assess respondents' engagement with

the unchurched and attitudes toward reaching out to the unchurched. One of the most

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8. See "Pre-Christian by length" chart in Appendix B.

9. Brian Kennedy, "Most Americans trust the military and scientists to act in the public's interest," Pew Research Center, October 18, 2016, http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/10/18/most-americans-trust-the-military-and-scientists-to-act-in-the-publics-interest/.

striking results of the entire survey comes in response to question 19, "How willing would you be to invite a previously unchurched friend to SBCC?," in which almost one-third of all respondents (32.19%) selected either "unsure" (7.13%), "somewhat unwilling" (11.06%), or "very unwilling" (14%). Though specific reasons for such a lack of willingness went unassessed by this survey, cross references with other responses and comparison with the broader pool of respondents yields some notable results.

Those who responded "very unwilling" are spread fairly evenly across age groups: 9 respondents in the age 30-39 group (15.79% of all "very unwilling" respondents); 10 in the age 40-49 age group (17.54%); 10 in the 50-59 age group (17.54%); and peaking at 16 in the 60-69 age group (28.07%).[10] The "very unwilling" attend Sunday services weekly slightly more often than the broader pool of respondents (83.93% to 76.24%),[11] participate in SBCC homegroups at nearly identical rates (80.7% - very unwilling, 81.82% - overall respondents),[12] and even serve in leadership capacities within the ministries of SBCC at rates similar to the broader pool of respondents.[13] And while 79.17% of all respondents indicated that "Quality teaching/preaching" was an influential factor in the decision to attend SBCC, 91.23% of the "very unwilling" subset indicated the same.[14]

According to the survey responses, those most likely to be "very unwilling to invite a previously unchurched friend to SBCC" are also those who have attended SBCC for the

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10. See "Very unwilling by age group" in Appendix B.

11. See "Very unwilling by Sunday attendance" in Appendix B.

12. See "Very unwilling by ministry participation" in Appendix B.

13. See "Very unwilling by ministry leadership" in Appendix B.

14. See "Very unwilling by attendance motivators" in Appendix B.

shortest amount of time. At 26.32%, those who have attended SBCC for 0-4 years represent the largest group of the "very unwilling," while those who have attended SBCC for 5-9 years represent another 22.81% of the "very unwilling."[15] The percentages of the "very unwilling" drop precipitously for the remaining attendance categories. This suggests that those who have most recently chosen SBCC as their church home are also the most likely to be "very unwilling" to invite others to do the same.

In the face of this bleak picture, the church's missional opportunity may be revealed by the responses to question 20 which suggest that SBCC members might prefer a more relational approach to engaging the unchurched. Question 20 asks, "Which of the following would be your most likely first step in introducing someone to the faith?" In response, 78.43% of all those surveyed selected, "A private conversation." It seems that the while the church as an institution may be waning in cultural influence and SBCC's own people are reticent to introduce the previously-unchurched to the church as a whole, if SBCC can identify ways to equip and encourage the individual members of SBCC in their missional calling, the opportunities to impact a post-Christian culture with the gospel are plentiful.

With the completion of the 2016 survey, the work of self-assessment had begun in earnest. The picture that emerged was of a church comprised almost entirely of self-identified Christians who were initially drawn to SBCC in order to further and strengthen their already-held Christian faith and that, among these believers, there was some reluctance to invite those from unchurched backgrounds to participate in the life of SBCC but an openness to individual conversations about faith. These pieces of data would prove

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15. See "Very unwilling by length" in Appendix B.

invaluable as a foundation for the ensuing conversations that would directly inform the Vision Frame.

<center>*The Vision Templates, 2019*</center>

One of the key tasks of the Vision Frame process is the clarification of the core identity of a given local church. As seen in chapter 3, Ford calls a church's operating culture its "code."

Articulation of this core identity is critical if SBCC is to make sense of how she is uniquely poised and called to send gospel ambassadors into her unique context. For the Elders, the investigation into core identity that was prompted by the results of the 2016 survey was accelerated by the 2018 pastoral transition. In this season of unforeseen disruption, the ability to articulate what made SBCC herself and to state with clarity a path for faithful ministry ahead rose to greater prominence than ever before. In the spring of 2019, the Elders read and worked through the exercises in Mancini's *God Dreams* with the hopes of identifying the ministry templates that felt congruent with our history as a church while simultaneously keeping an eye on how to pursue a vision of the future that included local gospel impact.

After much prayer and conversation, the Elders landed on one of Mancini's templates (spiritual formation) and one of our own making (geographic transformation). The spiritual formation template was the clearest fit among the 12 that Mancini outlines. With the brief description, "Your church's vision is for a spiritual formation that changes people and takes them along a significant pathway toward spiritual maturity,"[16] Mancini

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16. Mancini, *God Dreams*, 107.

could well have been summarizing the deepest longings of SBCC leadership since 1979. Yet, with the recognition of the changed cultural context, the Elders also wrestled with the opportunities that lie ahead.

The two *God Dreams* templates that best approached the desired posture toward the unchurched and non-believing community were ones labeled "targeted transformation" and "geographic saturation." Each offers compelling visions of a world reached with the gospel's redemptive message. Yet, each seemed to strike a slightly discordant note with SBCC leadership.

Mancini's brief definition for geographic saturation is, "Your church's vision is to bring the gospel to as many people as possible in your surrounding geography. You might state it as, 'We will define a geographic area around us and take responsibility to personally communicate and demonstrate the gospel to everyone in that area.'"[17] While this vision of gospel advancement is alluring, the specificity required in selecting one geographic area makes this vision difficult to embrace by a church that already enjoys a membership comprised of people spread across multiple cities and in very distinct communities within our region.

Similarly, his definition for targeted transformation didn't quite resonate, either. "Your church's vision is to identify a specific people, place, or thing you want to see changed dramatically by the gospel."[18] As before, the vision sounds compelling, but his examples centered on churches that had identified an issue or neighborhood or need that the church as a whole would focus their attention on. In light of SBCC's long-held belief in

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17. Mancini, *God Dreams*, 77.

18. Mancini, *God Dreams*, 80.

Every Member Ministry and a preference for "equipping the saints for the work of the ministry" (Eph 4:11), such a centralized vision seemed like too great of a violation of the code to hold any promise of widespread embrace.

Instead, the Elders envisioned a church reignited with gospel passion that would animate their way of being and operating in the places where God has already sovereignly placed them to live, work, and play, thereby honoring the presence and gifting of the Spirit within each one who calls SBCC their church home. The leadership was drawn to the imaginative possibilities found in Acts 17:26-27, "From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us." Through such an approach to evangelism and cultural engagement, the Elders dreamed of an entire region impacted by the good news of Jesus' redemptive work in the world and the resulting transformation being not only of individual lives but also of the city itself from one of the most unchurched in the country to one that increasingly bears the characteristics of the kingdom of God.

Out of this process of discernment and wrestling emerged a vision of "geographic transformation." By combining the evangelistic zeal of Mancini's geographic saturation and the kingdom-oriented ethos of his targeted transformation with the democratic and egalitarian sensibilities of SBCC's commitment to Every Member Ministry, SBCC leadership crafted an exciting and compelling template that is uniquely her own.

With the thoughtful work of clarifying the vision templates concluded, attention turned next to completing the Vision Frame itself.

Building the Vision Frame, 2020-2021

Identifying a unique vision template was an important step in picturing the future for SBCC. Yet, the remainder of the Vision Frame also required prayerful and thoughtful attention. For, even more than the templates, the Vision Frame itself holds the potential to paint a powerful picture of the future that God is calling his people at SBCC into.

Like a window frame, the Vision Frame is made up of four sides which hold things together, but it is truly the view through the window that draws the eye and, in the case of a vision of a church's future, the heart and the imagination. The vision proper—that which can be seen through the window—tells a compelling story of where God is leading a specific congregation by his Spirit to make a kingdom and gospel impact in ways that are true to the church's self-understanding and responsive to the specific context. As Mancini writes, "Vision Proper is *the church's living language that anticipates and illustrates God's better intermediate future*. This definition, in concert with the surrounding frame of mission, values, strategy, and measures, takes communicating a vision to a new level, one with an appropriate missional calling."[19] Yet, if the frame is not positively aligned with a church's reality and history, the picture in the middle will not hold. So, for SBCC leadership, the work on the frame had to happen first.

Work on the Vision Frame primarily took place among the Senior Leadership Team (consisting of both Lead Pastors and the Executive Pastor) alongside a leadership coach. Through numerous sessions, this group did the preliminary groundwork to begin to identify and express the four sides of the frame: mission, values, measures, and strategy.

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19. Will Mancini, *Church Unique: How Missional Leaders Cast Vision, Capture Culture, and Create Movement* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008)*, 176, emphasis original.

Each step of the Vision Frame process was intentional and painstaking in order to

discover the best expression of each independent aspect. At each step along the way, the

initial discussions and offerings of the subgroup were checked for resonance with larger

groups of leaders and stakeholders including Elders, staff, and homegroup leaders. This

thorough process of brainstorming, seeking feedback, and refining the work, allowed for a

more collaborative approach that resulted in a finished product that had broader buy-in

than if the subgroup had simply presented a completed Vision Frame based solely on their

own independent work. In light of SBCC's strong legacy of Every Member Ministry, this

approach was warranted and proved valuable.

The Four Sides of the Frame

Mancini tackles the four sides of the Vision Frame in the following order: mission,

values, strategy, and measures and suggests that church leaders may want to utilize the

same approach and order.[20] Yet, because of SBCC's process of soliciting feedback, seeking

buy-in and clarity, and honoring divergent perspectives, Mancini's seemingly linear

methodology did not fit our approach. Rather, we found ourselves working on all four sides

of the frame nearly concurrently and discovering that some of the work of the subgroup

required much greater collaboration to find resonance and create buy-in than other aspects

of the frame. The work on the measures and the strategy portions of the Vision Frame

required the least amount of revision, with only minor editorial suggestions or clarifying

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20. See, for example, this contention, "The first side to our Vision Frame is the missional mandate...defined as *a clear and concise statement that defines what the church is ultimately supposed to be doing*. The [missional mandate] answers 'question zero'—the question before all other questions." Mancini, *Church Unique*, 120, emphasis original.

comments. The work on the mission and the values, on the other hand, generated ample discussion and clarifying dialogue which resulted in repeated revisions and circling back to stakeholders in order to ensure resonance and alignment. Ultimately, SBCC's team finalized the four sides of the frame in the inverse order suggested by Mancini: measures, strategy, values, mission.

The work to articulate the measures drew heavily from SBCC's legacy of longing to make disciples and the clear preference for the spiritual formation template as outlined in *God Dreams*. In essence, the subgroup tackled the work of articulating an answer to the question, "What kind of disciple is SBCC trying to form?" An initial attempt to solicit the perspective of then-sitting Elders in December 2019 revealed a wide variety of ways to answer that question as well as some aspirational longings for fuller articulations of the life of discipleship.

While for many years SBCC has had a reputation of being a church family where one's mind is well-discipled and engaged, the subgroup detected longings within the congregation and leadership for a more robust and well-rounded understanding of discipleship that takes into account the whole life of the disciple. The challenge facing the subgroup, then, became how to communicate vision for something new while keeping appropriate continuity with the past so as not to violate the "code." As Mancini insists, "Visionary leadership is the art of protecting the past as we champion the future. Bold aspirations must be rooted in the values and visions that have come before."[21]

The measures—which SBCC leadership renamed the "Aim"—clarify the destination of the discipleship journey. With the helpful spiritual formation template central in our

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21. Mancini, *Church Unique*, 76.

thinking, and drawing on valuable feedback from other leadership stakeholders, the

subgroup ultimately came up with the following measures:

> Because of an encounter with the living God, maturing disciples demonstrate:
> Minds shaped by the Word of God
> Hearts shaped by the character of God
> Relationships shaped by the kingdom of God
> Priorities shaped by the mission of God

This articulation of the Aim of discipleship keeps in balance an appreciation of

SBCC's past with its familiar emphasis on the mind, the Word of God, and relationships, yet

also casts new vision for the future with language concerning reshaped hearts and

priorities, as well as emphasis on the kingdom and mission of God. Additionally, the use of

the present progressive form of "maturing" suggests that discipleship is an ongoing journey

of bringing one's whole life into conformity with their confession. This represented an

important element for the subgroup and numerous stakeholders to prevent

communicating a false assurance of "arrival" in the life of a disciple.

In attempting to articulate SBCC's strategy—rebranded as "Approach"—the

subgroup had much positive history to draw on. In many ways, the strategic approach of

SBCC has been relatively clear for decades. In expressing a preference for a "simple church"

model, past SBCC leaders have often cast vision for individual and corporate discipleship

that laid a sound foundation for the current generation of SBCC leaders to build upon. The

subgroup's task, then, was not to build something new, but to provide clear and concise

language to express the strategic aspect of SBCC's long-held ecclesiological vision. Perhaps

owing to the familiarity of such language, the strategy side of the frame garnered minimal

feedback from stakeholders.

SBCC's approach is outlined as:

Pause and pursue
>...develop rhythms that lead to individual growth in Christ

Come and worship
>...prioritize regular corporate worship as a vital aspect of growth in Christ

Join a group
>...share life together with other believers in pursuit of common growth in Christ

Go and serve
>...utilize giftedness for daily ministry and mission within the church family and in the broader world as a result of growth in Christ

Again, in keeping with the primacy of the spiritual formation template, the Approach emphasizes discipleship at both an individual and corporate level. This is especially seen in the first three imperatives of the Approach which describe the strategy in ways that will sound familiar to long-time members of SBCC. As with the Aim, the familiar resonance with the past can help to assure those who may be wary of change or new directions under new leadership. Simultaneously, however, the final imperative of the Aim is expressed with outward facing language that has not always been at the forefront of SBCC's methodology. For some who are eager to put their faith into action in meaningful ways in an unchurched and post-Christian environment, this language represents an exciting invitation to deploy the gifts given by the Spirit in ways that might seem fresh and new.

The two aspects of the Vision Frame that generated the most feedback and discussion—thereby requiring the most work—were the articulation of the values and the mission. Each, for various reasons, took longer to generate understanding and buy-in resulting in those being the final two sides of the frame to come to completion.

Any organization with an existing history already operates out of a set of values, stated or otherwise. Since SBCC already enjoys over four decades of history, the task facing the subgroup was one of unearthing the already existing values in order to name them and

then assess their fitness for leading SBCC into its God-given vision of the future. In order to broaden the perspectives and sources of input on the critical question of SBCC's values, the Elders initially tasked a separate, temporary group with contributing their viewpoints. That group consisted of one of the lead pastors, two then-sitting Elders, and SBCC's Pastor of Homegroups.[22] When it quickly became apparent that there wasn't enough continuity between that group and the group tasked with completing the remaining sides of the Vision Frame, that group was suspended and the Vision Frame subgroup took over the values discovery and articulation work.

Working closely with the leadership coach, the subgroup spent numerous hours trying to answer the question, "What makes SBCC uniquely herself?" Initial attempts at expressing values centered on either traits too generic to be useful (e.g. biblical) or declarations better suited for a doctrinal statement (e.g. Authority of Scripture). The real work, it seemed, lie in naming the ways in which SBCC was uniquely equipped and animated by God's Spirit for her own particular work in the world. The process was helped by the leadership coach's continued reminder, "The values aren't what we do, but characterize everything we do." The subgroup ultimately found that pairing together two words for each value allowed for a uniquely nuanced description of the kind of culture that SBCC enjoys and hopes to see carried forward into the future.

Once the subgroup had landed on an initial draft of the values—now known as "Atmosphere"—the first level of resonance checks happened with the Elders. While three of the values gained quick approval, a fourth generated significant discussion. The value

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22. The summary document capturing the reflections of this group is included as "Values Group Reflections" in Appendix C.

that the subgroup originally articulated as "Playfully Faithful" left some of the Elders feeling a disconnect. While the subgroup hoped through that value to express a deeply-held commitment to the truths of the gospel and orthodoxy combined with a generally light-hearted and fun-loving ministry environment, for some, the difficulty lie in the seeming incongruity of the two terms. For others, the term "playful" did not have positive connotations. A few liked the phrase and understood how the subgroup arrived there, but the general sense was hesitancy. The most commonly suggested alternative to "playfully faithful" was "joyfully faithful."

Conversations with the SBCC staff revealed a similar disconnect. Some openly wondered if "playfully faithful" cast our church family in a negative light, suggesting a lack of seriousness about the things of God, his kingdom, and the gospel. Others recognized that SBCC's approach to the life of faith has often been marked by laughter and lightheartedness while treating the Word of God and the gospel with gravity. As with the Elders, some greatly preferred "joyfully faithful" while others thought that "playfully faithful" better captured SBCC's operational ethos.

A final resonance check took place at a virtual meeting for SBCC's homegroup leaders. In prior seasons of church life, the homegroup leaders functioned as a second layer of leadership and their opinions and buy-in were often solicited when facing big decisions. Due to the lack of clarity around whether "playfully faithful" or "joyfully faithful" was a preferable descriptor, the subgroup decided to spend a portion of a homegroup leader meeting processing the question with these various leaders. Again—not surprisingly—the opinions were divided along the same lines as the Elders and staff demonstrated. Some loved "playfully" and some considered it unsuitable.

Though the subgroup greatly preferred "playfully faithful" as a more accurate descriptor of the ethos of SBCC, the amount of hesitancy among various stakeholders was sufficient enough for the subgroup to pivot. Not wanting the values to be a place of distraction and frustration, the subgroup opted for "Joyfully Faithful" and utilized the term "playful" in the supporting description. The resulting articulation of SBCC's Atmosphere is:

We are a family that is…
Joyfully faithful
Demonstrated by…
      Leadership and ministry marked by playfulness, humility, laughter, a high view of Scripture, and commitment to prayer
      Taking the gospel seriously, but not ourselves too seriously

Relentlessly relational
Demonstrated by…
      Freely offering grace and friendship with one another
      Being a spiritual family sharing life together even when things are hard

Collectively invested
Demonstrated by…
      An emphasis on every member ministry and a culture of contribution
      Valuing the participation of many over the performance of a few

Generously engaged
Demonstrated by…
      An open-handed connection to our larger community and the world
      Compassion for the least, lost, and last

Mancini describes values with the label "missional motives" and offers this definition and description, "We define these missional motives as *the shared convictions that guide the actions and reveal the strengths of the church*. They are the values that represent the conscious and collective soul of your church because they express your most deeply held ideals. They define your ministry's ethos….They are a constant reminder of what is most important to your church."[23] After the process of thoroughly vetting the

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23. Mancini, *Church Unique*, 129, emphasis original.

original draft of the values, the subgroup felt they had landed on a result that satisfied this lofty goal.

The final piece of the Vision Frame that remained to be completed was the statement of mission. Mancini calls this the missional mandate and writes, "Why do we exist? What is our raison d'être? The [missional mandate] is your church's compass and guiding North Star. As such, it provides direction and points everyone in that direction."[24] For the SBCC subgroup, the articulation of a version of the mission that resonated across groups of stakeholders would prove to be the most challenging aspect of constructing the Vision Frame.

SBCC's previous attempts to identify a driving mission ended either in wholesale adoption of another church's mission[25] or a generic, wordy statement that did little to capture the imagination or catalyze action.[26] The subgroup started by working to identify key phrases and action words to capture the essence of SBCC's existential purpose in the world. The initial list of key phrases was comprised of terms that either connected with SBCC's past or held special resonance with the vision of a fresh missional approach to church life. The resulting list of key phrases included "spiritual family," "become like Jesus," "for the sake of the world," and "for the glory of God." As can be seen just from that brief sampling, the subgroup's initial desire to represent both the past and the future in the

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24. Mancini, *Church Unique*, 120.

25. For many years, SBCC adopted the mission of Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis: "We exist to spread a passion for the supremacy of God in all things for the joy of all peoples through Jesus Christ," https://bethlehem.church/about/about-us/.

26. In late 2015, a subgroup of Elders worked to develop the following: "The mission of SBCC is to be a community of believers looking upward to God, growing inward in Christ, and moving outward by the Spirit for the glory of God."

articulation of mission quickly generated unwieldy and wordy lists that promised a similarly unwieldly and wordy end product. In other words, the desire to include too much content—born out of desire to accommodate various stakeholders and their opinions—ultimately would lead to the very type of statement that leadership was seeking to move away from.

Fortunately, the leadership coach was able to challenge the subgroup to move beyond pacifying the varied preferences of stakeholders to truly identify what the future could look like for SBCC. Although some of the original wording and phrases held promise, the task became to clarify and sharpen even at the expense of long-held favorite phrases or words. This aspect of the process was critical as the mission statement offers a brief glimpse into the church's self-understood reason for being and, when crafted well, can cast a compelling picture of the future and draw members into action.

When the subgroup considered SBCC's optimal future, one of the key longings was to move away from being a church that primarily existed to further the growth of those who already identified as disciples of Jesus to a more missional approach to the faith that challenged the church toward engagement with those not yet reached by the gospel. The leading verb in the mission statement needed to communicate that missional impulse. The subgroup landed on "inviting" as the verb that best expressed the missing link of SBCC's spiritual dynamic. Long a church that has been good at discipleship and even welcoming to those who find their way into the church, SBCC has not always had an outward-facing posture of invitation. If the vision proper is to become reality, the people of SBCC—from leadership to attendees—would have to cultivate an invitational ethos. Yet, key questions remained: who is invited and into what?

One of SBCC's distinctives is an inter-generational church. Aided by a 2008 merger with Trinity Baptist Church, SBCC now enjoys great age diversity within her membership. Additionally, because the core values Relentlessly Relational and Collectively Invested drive all that SBCC does, varying age groups are not segregated within church life. Rather, older adults and teenagers may serve together as helpers in the class of young children. College-age students and young professionals may serve as leaders of students in the youth program, thereby interacting with the parents of these students, as well. In short, SBCC has enjoyed a multi-generational approach to church life and the mission statement needed to reflect an appropriately wide call. Therefore, the subgroup landed on "Inviting young and old" as the beginning of the mission statement.

The next piece of the mission statement was to identify what exactly young and old were being invited into. For this piece of the process, the subgroup gave careful consideration to demographic realities. Santa Barbara is a city with a reputation for offering the best that life has to offer. Those who call the Santa Barbara area home are often those who have achieved a measure of success and even fame. For many, Santa Barbara living represents the good life made manifest. Yet, the gospel's picture of the good life looks very different than the types of features that might be profiled in a travel brochure.

The subgroup wanted to capitalize on that dissonance and originally proposed "Inviting young and old to the good life in Jesus and the family of God." The inclusion of "the good life" was meant to capture attention and make a statement that the good life is not, in fact, found where our broader culture might look for it. Additionally, the phrase "and the family of God" helped to further communicate the family atmosphere that SBCC embraces.

When presented to the Elders to assess resonance, the phrase "the good life" was not universally embraced. For some Elders it sounded trite or insinuated a health and wellness gospel message. Though the subgroup and some Elders really liked the phrase and saw promise in it, those who did not voiced strong opposition. As the subgroup processed the feedback from the Elders, it became clear that the phrase would likely need to be changed lest it be an ongoing source of frustration that would inhibit buy in.

The subgroup pondered how to retain the positive aspects of "the good life" and its potential for telling a compelling story, but wanted to find a solution that wouldn't alienate those that considered the phrase to be shallow. In a conversation between one of the subgroup members and another church leader one day, the other leader—who knew a significant amount about the hopes of the subgroup in crafting the statement—suggested the addition of the word "truly" so that the statement read "Inviting young and old to the truly good life in Jesus and the family of God." The leader indicated that this change would allow even greater compelling dissonance with the cultural narratives surrounding SBCC and could differentiate enough from the negative connotations some associated with the phrase "the good life."

When presented to the Elders, the updated mission statement—now rebranded as SBCC's "Ambition"—gained quick and universal acceptance. Even those who had previously expressed strong disagreement now expressed enthusiasm about how this articulation both resonates with long-held values and also pushes SBCC forward toward a more optimal future.

Through a process of rigorous introspection, dreaming, collaboration, listening, and revising, SBCC's leadership had come up with a finalized outer frame.[27] With the four sides of the frame now completed, attention could be turned to what is viewed when one looks through the frame into the world beyond.

<center>*Imagining the Future: Vision Proper*</center>

The most significant storytelling piece of the Vision Frame is the vision proper. The vision proper is a narrative approach to casting vision for where it seems the Spirit of God is leading a specific congregation. It tells a church what the destination looks like and, when well written, can capture a church's past and present while pointing toward the future. In keeping with the unique "geographic transformation" template, the subgroup also recognized the opportunity embedded in this narrative to deeply connect to local realities.[28]

The most arduous work for the vision proper was not in the dreaming stage, but in working toward specificity. Though the subgroup understood the longings of enough stakeholders and congregants to be able to dream of a Spirit-animated future, SBCC has never had a culture of "measurement," so the task of trying to communicate clearly how the church will actually reach goals was complicated. While the leadership coach provided numerous examples of other congregations that measured in very specific terms, the

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27. The four sides of SBCC's finalized Vision Frame can be found in Appendix D.

28. The vision proper is presented in Appendix D as the second page of the Vision Frame document, under the heading, "Beyond the Horizon."

subgroup felt that such an approach in the vision proper would be considered a significant enough violation of code that the entire Vision Frame undertaking could be in jeopardy.

Yet, the subgroup also recognized that a vision proper with only vague descriptions of change and outcomes would do little to catalyze action. The leadership coach encouraged the subgroup to do the work to find the "gulp not gasp" measures that would require intentional response and proactivity from leadership, but not be so outlandish or outside of SBCC norms as to be unhelpful. In response, the subgroup opted for ambitious but general language such as "hundreds of changed lives" and "launching several new pastors." These kinds of descriptors provide the kind of forward momentum desired, but do not present as "too corporate" or "numbers-driven" in ways that would not resonate with SBCC stakeholders.

When the subgroup's initial work on the vision proper was presented to the Elders it was met with fairly wide acceptance. Though there were some questions regarding the measurables, the overall vision statement resonated well with the Elders and even sparked excitement for some. The next step was to present the vision proper to the staff team to look for similar enthusiasm and resonance.

The staff response was slightly more varied than the Elder response. This is not surprising since the two groups of leaders were approaching the vision proper from very different perspectives. As a group charged with big-picture oversight of the church's direction, the Elders were able to appraise the vision proper from a high-level vantage point and consider the overall thrust of the vision. The staff, on the other hand, approached the vision proper from an implementation viewpoint, creating concern for some staff members. The language of the Vision Frame seemed to present new areas of responsibility

or ministry emphasis that left some staff members curious about how they would be able to respond to the vision proper within the framework of their current responsibilities.

To help address that concern, the leadership coach had prepared the subgroup to work through an exercise to identify which of the items in the vision proper represented inputs, outputs, and outcomes. The inputs are those things that the leadership of SBCC would adopt as actionable responsibilities, i.e. the "tasks" of the vision proper. The outputs are the results of the inputs, i.e. the "product" of the inputs. Finally, the outcomes are the end results of both the inputs and the outputs.

The subgroup provided the rest of the staff with hard copies of the vision proper and asked them to mark up the copies and to delineate the inputs, outputs, and outcomes. After completing this work individually, the staff team came together to discuss their work in small groups and then in a large group setting. This exercise was tremendously helpful in clarifying expectations for staff as well as identifying new places of ministry emphasis within existing roles and responsibilities. After completing this exercise, the staff engagement and enthusiasm about the vision proper was noticeably higher. With their specific responsibilities identified—and not as daunting as perhaps first feared—the vision proper started to capture the imagination and the hearts of various staff members.

Vision-driven goal setting

All involved with the creation and refinement of the Vision Frame recognized that its value lie not in the creating itself, but in truly using it. For SBCC, the first order of business for using the tool was to identify which of the many aspects of the vision proper represented "next steps." While some of what arose from the Vision Frame process

articulated long-term hopes, none of those hopes would be approached without systematically identifying what process steps came first.

At an Elder retreat in February 2021, the work began to identify which elements of the vision proper would become areas of specific and intentional focus in the short-term. To facilitate this, the center of the Vision Frame was divided into four sections and labeled, "1 year quarterly," "1-3 years," "3-5 years," and "5-7 years." These time horizons serve to create momentum around the various hopes expressed by the vision proper. Without specific time horizons, the vision proper could easily become a monument to the thinking of a particular point in time rather than an expression of the ongoing hopes for SBCC. The time horizons help to define points of emphasis and ministry investment in pursuit of the overall goals of the vision proper.

The first order of business for the Elders was to determine which of these time horizons were under their purview and which would be better handled by the church staff. Although there was some consideration given to the idea that the Elders fill in each time horizon, the dominant sentiment was that the Elder role called for more big-picture leadership rather than day-to-day tactical and operations decision-making. At the end of that conversation, the Elders agreed that the "1-3 year" and "5-7 year" time horizons were the areas where they would focus their thoughts, allowing the staff to fill in the "1 year quarterly" and "3-5 year" bands with ministry-specific goals and emphases designed to build toward the other time horizons.

For the next step in this portion of the process, the Elders considered the phrasing of the vision proper and attempted to group various statements sequentially, hoping to identify which elements were primary and which were secondary. Considering the

ambitious nature of some of the elements of vision proper, not all that is articulated there can be accomplished immediately and some aspects will build on one another. While not moving away from the spiritual formation template that is foundational to SBCC's self-understanding and long-time approach to ministry, some clear themes emerged as points of emphasis for the furthering of church leadership's hopes to also be a church that brings about geographic transformation. Once those points of emphasis were clarified, the Elders could then begin to articulate the goals and initiatives that belonged in their designated time horizons.

The Elders' discussion and deliberation—which exceeded the retreat and also included conversation in additional meetings—eventually led to the following areas of focus:

1-3 Years:
Development of specific gospel-fluency training/experience
Creation of intentional leadership development pathways
Intentional emphasis on missional aspects of faith, becoming disciples who make disciples

5-7 Years:
Noticeable emphasis on thinking Christianly in all spheres of life
Reinvigorated every member ministry through enhanced gift discovery and deployment
Articulated vision for everyday ambassadors[29]

The elements included in these two time horizons build on one another, such that the achievement of the goals of the 5-7 year band are dependent upon the prior accomplishment of the goals of the 1-3 year band. With these targets now clarified, the SBCC staff was tasked with filling in the remaining time horizons. Though the staff was

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29. A visual version of the completed Vision Frame that includes these goals included in the related time horizons can be found in Appendix D.

introduced to the Elders' completed time horizons in May 2021, the staff's work to fill in the "1 year quarterly" and "3-5 year" bands began in August 2021.

At a Leadership Team meeting in mid-August, the subgroup again presented the Vision Frame to this smaller subset of the SBCC staff. The purpose was to begin the process of conducting ministry inventories and assessments around the goals in the "1-3 year" time horizon.[30] The ministry inventory served to highlight both current ministry initiatives or programs that were already goal-aligned as well as opportunities for new approaches or initiatives to address gaps in reaching the goals outlined in the "1-3 year" time horizon. Subsequent to the completion of the inventory, supervisors met with ministry area leaders to talk about how identified growth areas could be used to populate the "1 year quarterly" band on the Vision Frame. These conversations proved fruitful in yielding concrete action plans for ministry area leaders with respect to the church-wide goals identified by the Elders as well as serving to complete the lower half of the Vision Frame.

The articulation of these time-specific and vision-aligned goals represents the completion of an actionable Vision Frame. This tool positions SBCC's Elders, staff, ministry leaders, and larger church family to live out the enduring call to make disciples in a way that is expressive of the church's unique identity and responsive to the specific context.

Conclusion

A process that unknowingly began with the all-church survey of December 2016 resulted in the completion of the Vision Frame in August 2021. Over almost five years—and

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30. The SBCC Vision Frame Ministry Inventory can be found in Appendix E, "Vision Frame Support Materials."

by virtue of a painfully clarifying season of pastoral transition—SBCC's culture and approach to ministry were unearthed, critically examined, articulated, refined, and repackaged. The end result is a Vision Frame tool loaded with potential to give SBCC language for her unique embodiment of the universal calling to make disciples. Even the most finely crafted tool, however, is only effective if it is put to proper use.

CHAPTER 5:

PUTTING THE VISION FRAME TO WORK

A tool is only useful if it is put to use and the Vision Frame tool is no different in that way. Using the analogy of driving, Mancini writes, "Alignment is the critical work that must be done early in the rollout of vision. You don't just hit the gas pedal when you see where God wants you to drive. You must work on the front end before you put the pedal to the metal."[1] For SBCC, a church with a limited history of clear and vision-driven approaches to ministry, gaining alignment around the completed Vision Frame requires flexing some previously underworked muscles. Nonetheless, even in the earliest days of deployment, there are obvious signs of hope for long-term, broad buy-in not only by ministry staff but by the church family at large.

Advancing the Aim

Among the four sides of the Vision Frame, the Aim (what Mancini dubs "marks" or "measures") had the most immediate resonance with SBCC's legacy of spiritual formation with a somewhat academic bent. The value of clarifying what is meant by a disciple seemed to resonate somewhat readily with most who learned of these efforts. As a result, with a strategic eye toward future roll out of less familiar aspects, the Senior Leadership Team chose to begin a soft roll out by introducing the concepts of the Aim portion of the Vision Frame. Because the Aim features the most continuity with past expressions of church life at

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1. Will Mancini, *Church Unique: How Missional Leaders Cast Vision, Capture Culture, and Create Movement* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008), 198.

SBCC, this seemed to be the logical and most entry-level place to begin the work of introducing the Vision Frame to the broader congregation.

Accordingly, the four characteristics included under Aim formed the framework for a four-week preaching series in August-September 2020. Each year in late August or early September, SBCC has an "anniversary series" of sermons. During these weeks, the church family spends time reflecting back on the founding commitments and ethos of the church in order to recommit to core principles again. Past anniversary series have focused on topics such as living under the authority of God's Word, living out the priesthood of all believers, and living evangelistic lives.

Over these four Sundays in 2020, the Lead Pastors introduced the concepts of maturing disciples as those who have their minds shaped by the Word of God, hearts shaped by the character of God, their relationships shaped by the kingdom of God, and their priorities shaped by the mission of God.[2] The reception to these sermons and the introduction of the Vision Frame was generally positive, even among some long-time members of SBCC most accustomed to a less vision-clear approach to ministry. While there were certainly some critics, the overall response was positive and receptive.

In addition to preaching four sermons on the Aim, in order to continue to keep it in front of the church family and to present them in a manner that would lend to self-evaluation, the measures were presented in two different ways that the people of SBCC could bring home with them. The first was a bookmark featuring the four marks spelled out along with personal diagnostic questions that one could use regularly to examine their

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2. Audio files of this sermon series can be found at
https://www.sbcommunity.org/sermons/?wpfc_sermon_series=church-anniversary.

growth in discipleship.[3] These bookmarks were prepared and made available during the preaching series that introduced the measures. The choice of bookmarks aligns well with SBCC's long-held core identity as a community of learners.

Alongside the bookmarks, the Aim was included in the introduction of the homegroup study. Though this may seem a small step, in a context like SBCC, in which homegroups are seen as the primary discipleship mechanism and the homegroup study is read and used by a significant portion of the church family, this is no minimal gesture. To have the Aim unapologetically included in the opening section of a homegroup study communicates a collective dedication to this framework as a way for assessing progress toward the goal of making disciples. The Aim has continued to appear in the introduction of most subsequent studies, though not all.

Significantly, the process of writing the studies themselves has also come to be shaped by the measures. SBCC's Pastor of Homegroups has created a template for writing each study that draws directly from the language and assumptions spelled out by the Aim.[4] This template serves to keep the concerns of the measures in front of SBCC in a general way. This kind of passive culture reinforcement is critical if the Vision Frame concepts are going to move from abstract and occasional to more concrete and a regular part of church life at SBCC.

Furthermore, additional work has been done at various homegroup leader gatherings over the past two years to continue to explore how the work of homegroup leaders can be informed by the measures of a maturing disciple. Leaders have been asked

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3. The bookmark can be found in Appendix E.

4. An example of the homegroup study template can be found in Appendix E.

to assess their current approaches, to brainstorm how to be more robust in their methodology, and to dream about what maturing disciples might increasingly look like within their groups. The Pastor of Homegroups has also checked in with leaders using this framework as a helpful reference point.

Due to the elevated place of homegroups in SBCC's history and ministry model, the adoption of the Aim in such an obvious way is a good indicator of and harbinger for increasing buy in among the larger church family. Homegroups are a crucial field for championing a more vision-aligned approach to ministry and the early signs are encouraging.

Getting Engaged

If the Aim represents a point of continuity with past versions of SBCC life, other aspects of the Vision Frame represent less familiar ways of pursuing the life of faith in the context of this particular local church. Direct, gospel-fluent engagement with the surrounding culture is one of those areas.

Though there is some institutional memory of a time when SBCC was very committed to hopeful gospel engagement with the surrounding culture, most of that resides in those who have been a part of SBCC for more than three decades and for whom that type of engagement is often spoken of as descriptive of a bygone era. Yet, in spelling out the Ambition side of the Vision Frame, SBCC leadership chose the language of "Inviting young and old to the truly good life in Jesus and the family of God." If the church was going to live into the invitational nature of that statement, it would require some intentionality.

The first attempt to address the missional gap at SBCC took place in the summer of 2019 through a small group experience called A17 Group. Drawing on the example of Paul's engagement in Athens in Acts 17, this group gathered for five weeks to learn together about both the gospel message and the local context and to encourage one another in evangelistic engagement.[5] Using a curriculum created in house, a demographically diverse group of six SBCC members went through the small group experience. Though plans for additional groups never came to fruition, a seed was planted for greater gospel engagement.

The most obvious expression of a commitment to increased engagement came through the process of adding a new staff member to the SBCC team. When SBCC's Missions Pastor stepped into a new role on staff, the opening created an opportunity for staffing in a vision-aligned way. Rather than seeking to hire someone to simply steward existing commitments and relationships, SBCC leadership recognized a unique moment to craft a job description and title in a way that spoke of the hopes embedded in the Vision Frame.

In mid-2020, the Elders approved a search for a new position, Pastor of Local and Global Engagement. Though not as succinct a title as Missions Pastor, the Elders felt that the new title better reflected the missional hopes expressed through the Vision Frame. The Elders did not want to hire someone simply to maintain an existing program, but someone who understood their role to be in the vein of Ephesians 4:12 by equipping the saints for the work of ministry in our local context and around the world.

Yet, even the most innovative position title only has so much influence if the actual job description is disconnected from the hopes that informed the title. To that end, one of

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5. The course flow for A17 Group can be found in Appendix F.

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SBCC's Lead Pastors worked alongside the Executive Pastor to create a draft version of a job description for a reimagined position, employing language that drew directly from the Vision Frame and, particularly, from the "Beyond the Horizon" portion. After Elder input and minor revisions, the finalized job description was completed and used in a hiring process that concluded in the middle of 2021 with SBCC adding a new staff member dedicated to extending SBCC's reach of engagement both locally and globally.[6]

In a short time, the Pastor of Local and Global Engagement has already begun to work within the culture to move SBCC more and more into a posture of direct, gospel-informed encounters with the surrounding community. Though lasting attitudes and shifts in behavior will require long-term assessment, early indicators suggest that many at SBCC are eager to live their life of faith in a way that is a blessing to those among whom they live, work, and play and the ongoing work of the Pastor of Local and Global Engagement will be instrumental in helping to facilitate and cast vision for that.

Achievements and Assessments

While the goal for the Vision Frame is widespread buy-in at a congregational level, the need for the SBCC staff to work in a vision-aligned manner is evident. As frontline leaders, the staff will be the ones to help bring the Vision Frame into the daily realities of church life. If the Vision Frame is to be something more than an exercise that resides in a binder on a shelf, broad acceptance from the SBCC staff is critical.

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6. The completed job description for the Pastor of Local and Global Engagement can be found in Appendix E.

SBCC's leadership has worked to make sure that the hopes expressed by the Vision Frame inform the working imperatives of the staff. The first step in this process, referenced in chapter 4, was the Ministry Inventory exercise that created an opportunity to assess current ministry practices in light of the 1-3 year and 5-7 year goals articulated within the Vision Frame and to identify areas of strength as well as areas for greater attention.

To ensure ongoing progress toward goals, and especially toward those on much later time horizons, this cannot be a one-time initiative. Instead, the process will likely be repeated each year for celebration of goals reached and the identification of new opportunities for continuing to lead in a manner consistent with the church-wide goals.

By following this process annually, staff will have benchmarks against which to measure progress toward the church-wide goals. As this process unfolds, the needs of the later time horizons will become clearer. Therefore, completion of the "3-5 year" time horizon will take place at a point in the future and will utilize a similar process of assessment, inventory, and analysis for ministry areas over against the Elder identified goals of the "5-7 year" time horizon.

Additionally, in the fall of 2021, SBCC staff were given an updated procedure for annual reviews. The review process began with the introduction of a new framework for completing self-evaluations. This self-reflection exercise included newly adopted questions, one of which directly tied each staff member's work to the larger considerations of the Vision Frame.[7] The Senior Leadership Team felt that this was an important inclusion not only for the sake of keeping the priorities of the Vision Frame in the foreground of staff members' thinking, but also to the end of allowing each staff member to identify and take

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7. SBCC Staff Self-Evaluation Form can be found in Appendix E.

pride in how their work plays a role in fulfilling the hopeful picture painted by the Vision Frame.

Staff responses to these questions showed a high level of fluency in the Vision Frame as well as ownership of the Vision Proper. Staff members can see clearly how their contributions are advancing the vision which serves to increase work satisfaction as well as generate innovative thinking about advancing the vision even further.

Communicating for Culture Shift

A final piece of the immediate implementation puzzle relates to direct communication of both the reasoning behind and the content of the Vision Frame. As various aspects of the Vision Frame were completed, senior leadership sought opportunities to communicate enthusiastic embrace of both this process and the results. And while one-on-one conversations are perhaps the most effective means by which to woo those who are hesitant, in a church setting the pulpit will most often have the broadest reach and SBCC is no exception.

The August-September 2020 preaching series that considered the marks of a maturing disciple is just one example of how the pulpit has been used to communicate vision. In a similar fashion to the year before, in August-September 2021, the Lead Pastors preached a series on church life together that drew on the Atmosphere language of the Vision Frame. Built around the example of the earliest church in Acts 2, each week the people of SBCC were challenged to consider how both the historical and contemporary

church were called to be joyfully faithful, relentlessly relational, collectively invested, and generously engaged.[8]

To communicate something new and fresh within the context of something familiar has been an important value in the process of rolling out the Vision Frame. Since the purpose of anything like the Vision Frame itself is still a question for some who are a part of SBCC, there is great value in celebrating what can be retained even while working to bring a new direction.

Beyond complete series dedicated to preaching on the themes of the Vision Frame, SBCC's Lead Pastors have also been committed to regularly incorporating vision-aligned language into their teaching, no matter the series or topic. References to "the truly good life in Jesus and the family of God," "gospel fluency," and various aspects of the Atmosphere and Aim have become more commonplace in SBCC sermons. By consistent repetition and inclusion, the people of SBCC are hearing a common refrain that alludes to the larger melody of the Vision Frame.

Yet, culture shift cannot be captured exclusively by what is said in the pulpit. While the pulpit remains an indispensable mechanism for keeping the hopes of the Vision Frame before the people of SBCC, messages that come from the pulpit alone but are to be found in no other corner of a church's life come to be seen as hollow and suspect. Yet, vision that is corporately owned will be evident throughout a church's life and ministry together.

SBCC leadership is working to create broad awareness of and buy in to the Vision Frame at various levels of church life. One prominent example is the recent retooling of

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8. Audio files of this sermon series can be found at
https://www.sbcommunity.org/sermons/?wpfc_sermon_series=church-anniversary.

SBCC's membership class, known as Foundations. While previous iterations of this experience focused on SBCC's history, theological convictions, and philosophy of ministry, current leadership has chosen to use that time to orient newcomers to the culture of SBCC by utilizing the Atmosphere portion of the Vision Frame. The Lead Pastors prepared short videos that detail how each of the four commitments plays out in church life and each Foundations participant is expected to watch those videos. During the Foundations small group gathering, the time is oriented around pursuing those themes further and exploring alongside potential members how they can both benefit from and contribute to such an Atmosphere.

Such communication and vision casting at the outset of one's journey into membership helps set the appropriate tone and foregrounds the Vision Frame as an important tool for healthy church life. Though this approach certainly doesn't eliminate the need for ongoing vision casting, SBCC leadership has found it helpful as an avenue for communicating vision directly and, in some cases, early in the lives of those who are a part of the church family.

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Top-Level Traction

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Though the Elder board played a prominent role in the creation of the Vision Frame, SBCC's Elders serve for a fixed term. With the exception of the two Lead Pastors, SBCC's Elders serve for six years before rotating off of the Elder board. As a result, 2021 brought about the end of the term of service for two Elders. Following the congregational vote at the annual business meeting, the three newly elected Elders began their onboarding process in December of 2021.

Part of the onboarding process for the new Elders included an overview of the newly-minted Vision Frame. For these new Elders to serve effectively in their role requires full understanding of the purpose and driving passion behind the Vision Frame in order that they might help keep the church and her leadership on the appropriate trajectories. More significantly, however, than mere familiarity is embrace of the Vision Frame.

Since the tumultuous pastoral transition of 2018, each subsequent group of Elders has featured at least two members who were significantly involved in both the time period preceding the departure of both founding pastors as well as the painful aftermath. One characteristic tendency of those groupings of Elders was a desire to communicate gratitude for and continuity with SBCC's past, sometimes at the expense of communicating anticipation about SBCC's future.

With the Elder rotation heading into 2022, however, the composition of the Elder group has noticeably changed and there appears to be greater readiness and desire to not only dream about the future, but also to communicate broadly about the exciting days ahead. One of the newest Elders reported that when she first read the materials in the Vision Frame she was excited but also confused, saying, "I'm a pretty involved member of this church and I can't figure out how I haven't heard this stuff. Was there a big meeting that I missed?" She went on to detail that her enthusiasm about the dreams and ambition reflected in the Vision Frame would readily resonate with so many of her fellow church members and she was looking forward to seeing how we would roll it out more broadly and with appropriate confidence and anticipation.

Such traction and enthusiasm even among Elders who were not involved in the creation process for the Vision Frame bodes well for its longevity and vitality. Indeed, if

SBCC's top-level leadership did not have such a perspective, the outlook for the Vision

Frame would not be very promising. At it is, however, Elders old and new are engaged and

committed to see the Vision Frame become a driving force as SBCC lives into her unique

calling in her specific context.

Taking the Long View

Not surprisingly, much about the Vision Frame process resists quick assessment.

While it is relatively easy to appraise some aspects of short-term acceptance and

implementation, long-term outcomes must be measured over the course of years as SBCC

lives into and operates out of this clarified vision into the future. While the picture of

progress is clear, the progress will be—by both nature and design—methodical.

Due to the painstaking and intentional work that went into ensuring the various

elements of the Vision Frame aligned with existing core principles of SBCC, I believe that

these efforts at clarifying and articulating vision will resonate with many long-time

members while also giving new vitality to fresh opportunities for application. While there

will certainly be those who feel that any articulation of specific vision represents significant

enough departure from "how things work" at SBCC, I believe that most will find themselves

energized and engaged anew as they are presented with a life of faith that has an end

beyond themselves in view.

It is not hard to envision the missional edge being the most challenging aspect of the

new vision-aligned approach to church life at SBCC. Following a trajectory familiar to many

congregations, sometime in the past decade or so SBCC readily embraced a comfortable

status quo that highlighted the interior life of discipleship at the expense of the exterior

mission of a disciple. Fighting against that status quo will take constancy and commitment to the shared principles captured in the Vision Frame.

Ultimately, the clearest outcomes of commitment to the Vision Frame will come by way of lives changed by the gospel and for the kingdom of God through the faithfulness of God's people to live on mission. As the Vision Frame takes deeper roots within SBCC, I believe and expect that more and more people will find themselves growing deeper in their love for Christ, more resolute in their imitation of him, and more joyful in their role as part of a missionary force of kingdom ambassadors ready to bring the hope of the gospel into the places where they live, work, and play.

Lessons for Leaders

As the religious landscape changes in the West, the journey that SBCC is on may become a more common one as established churches recognize a need for new clarity of vision for the post-Christian context in which they find themselves. For leaders in similar contexts who would hope to employ the Vision Frame process in their already-established church, a few encouragements are in order.

First, the work of specificity is critical. If God is indeed putting together uniquely gifted and equipped collections of believers poised to bear gospel witness in distinct contexts, leaders who hope to live out context-responsive vision must do the work of striving for specificity and clarity. When assembling the Vision Frame, SBCC's subgroup was regularly pushed beyond generic phrasing to more apt and focused terminology and the end result was more engaging and empowering language. At times, the work of creating crystal clear language might feel laborious, but for the leader committed to discovering and

articulating God's unique purpose for a particular local church, it is important to stay the course. Once the language truly reflects the calling of the church in the context, it becomes readily evident that the work was well worth the effort.

A second encouragement to those undertaking the journey of clarified vision is to anticipate dissonance. Leaders often have a clarity or sense of destination when considering the future of the church and it is not uncommon in the middle of processes such as the Vision Frame to discover that many others who play a role in the system share little of that sense of direction. When a system is regularly meeting the needs of its participants, most would prefer it to remain the same. The leader of change would be well served to expect such dissonance. If the resistance to change comes as a surprise to the leader, the response of the leader will likely undermine the change efforts in one of two ways: serving the status quo or alienating the stakeholders.

There will be times in the adventure of unearthing and expressing a unique vision that the pull of the status quo—and the voices that long to preserve their preferred experience of equilibrium—feels overwhelmingly strong. In the moments when the easiest course of action appears to be appeasement in order to resolve tension, the leader must forge ahead toward a more preferable vision of the future. To serve the status quo is to cast a vote for irrelevance and to turn away from God's purpose in putting a unique church in a specific setting.

Yet, leaders also must remember that their outward posture in guiding change is as critical as the inner fortitude required to see the process through to the end. A second temptation for the leader when experiencing resistance is to simply push forward with little regard for the willingness of the people to follow. Doing so is an equally serious

mistake as serving the status quo. One of my leadership challenges arising from the Vision Frame process has been how to communicate a preferable vision of the future without also—implicitly or explicitly—sending a message of dissatisfaction for the church that SBCC is at present. Pushing forward change initiatives in service of a brighter, missional future also must involve bringing along the actual people of a church family. To do so effectively, a leader must moderate their own external presentation toward a posture of winsome invitation, tapping into the latent missional hopes and dreams that simply lie dormant in many Christians. Taking the proverbial hill without ensuring that people are willing to follow is no more faithful than acquiescing to the diminishing potential of the status quo.

Until a leader has overcome the internal dissonance and addressed the exterior resistance, an effort of change stands little chance for success. Yet, the leader caught off guard by the dissonance and resistance can be easily drawn toward undermining the change process by either serving the status quo or alienating the church that is in pursuit of the church that may one day be. Anticipating the challenges will be enable a leader to create and guide change that pulls a church family closer to its God-intended missional purpose.

Finally, the change leader must recognize that they are also opening up their own lives to examination and the potential for transformation. Indeed, leaders who traverse the sometimes choppy terrain of leading change are likely to learn as much about themselves as they are about their congregation or their community. The leader who remains open to the transformative possibilities for their own life can embody for a church the potential for the Spirit of God to do a similarly transformative work in the spiritual family at large. To

miss the opportunity to hone one's character and ministry approach is to betray the process of change. On the other hand, leaders who readily embrace not only congregational change, but also personal transformation, tell a compelling story of God's continued work to bring to completion his good and hopeful promises both for local churches and his beloved children who lead them.

Conclusion

SBCC's journey of change is far from over, but because of a thorough and thoughtful process, the first hopeful steps are underway and the promise of the future is strong. Jesus promised to build his church and by his grace and through the empowering of his Spirit, he is doing so through a group of imperfect yet curious and committed followers in Santa Barbara. Through increased clarity on her unique calling in the world, intentional work toward increasing organizational alignment, and consistent reinforcement and reminders of the missional vision, Santa Barbara Community Church is poised to make a significant gospel impact by making more and deeper disciples in a community aching to hear of the truly good life in Jesus and the family of God.

APPENDIX A:

2016 SBCC CONGREGATIONAL SURVEY

Q1 What is your age group?

Answered: 408   Skipped: 0
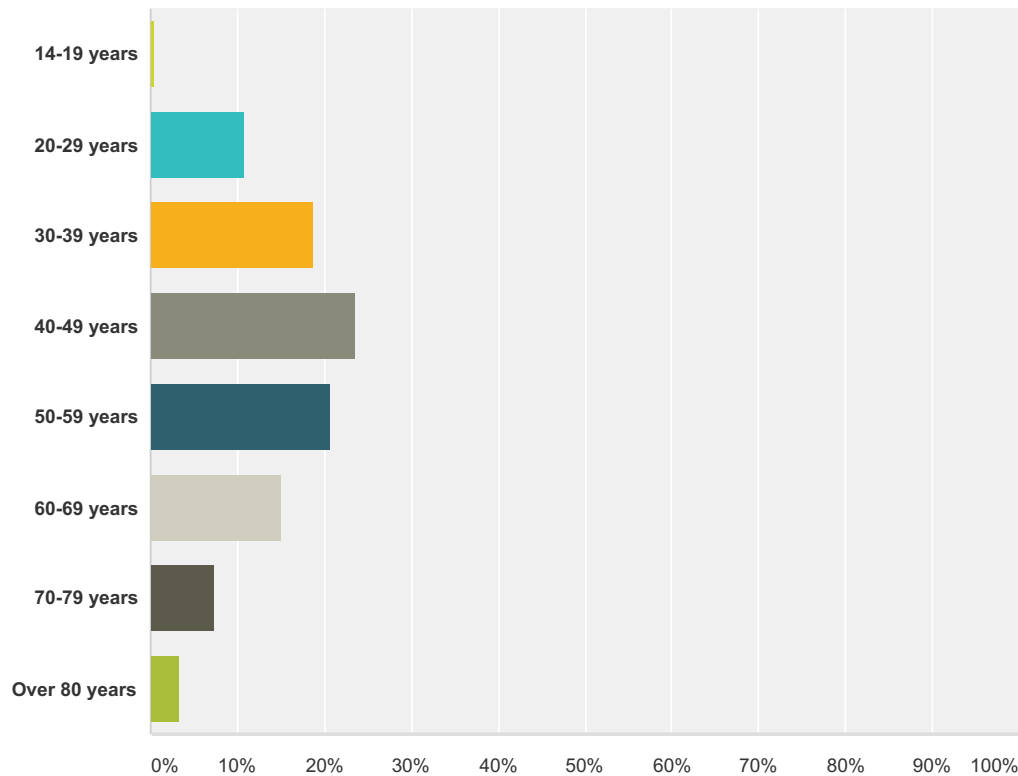
Answer Choices	Responses	
14-19 years	**0.49%**	2
20-29 years	**10.78%**	44
30-39 years	**18.87%**	77
40-49 years	**23.53%**	96
50-59 years	**20.59%**	84
60-69 years	**14.95%**	61
70-79 years	**7.35%**	30
Over 80 years	**3.43%**	14
Total		**408**

Q2 How long have you attended Santa Barbara Community Church?

Answered: 408   Skipped: 0
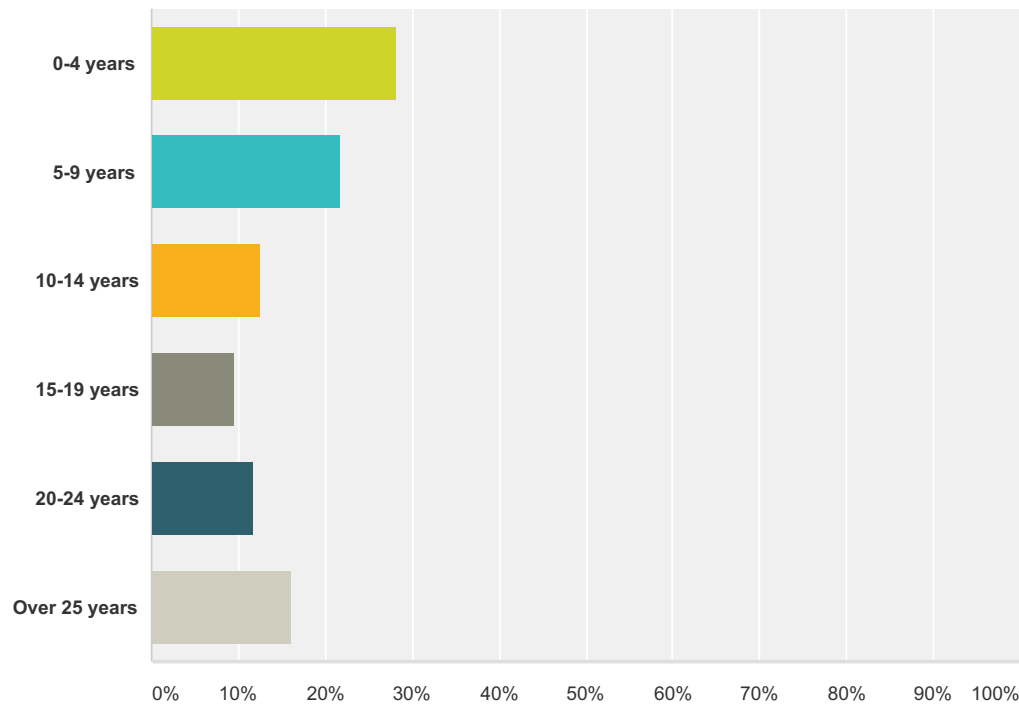
Answer Choices	Responses	
0-4 years	**28.19%**	115
5-9 years	**21.81%**	89
10-14 years	**12.50%**	51
15-19 years	**9.56%**	39
20-24 years	**11.76%**	48
Over 25 years	**16.18%**	66
Total		**408**

Q3 Which of the following best describes your typical Sunday worship attendance?
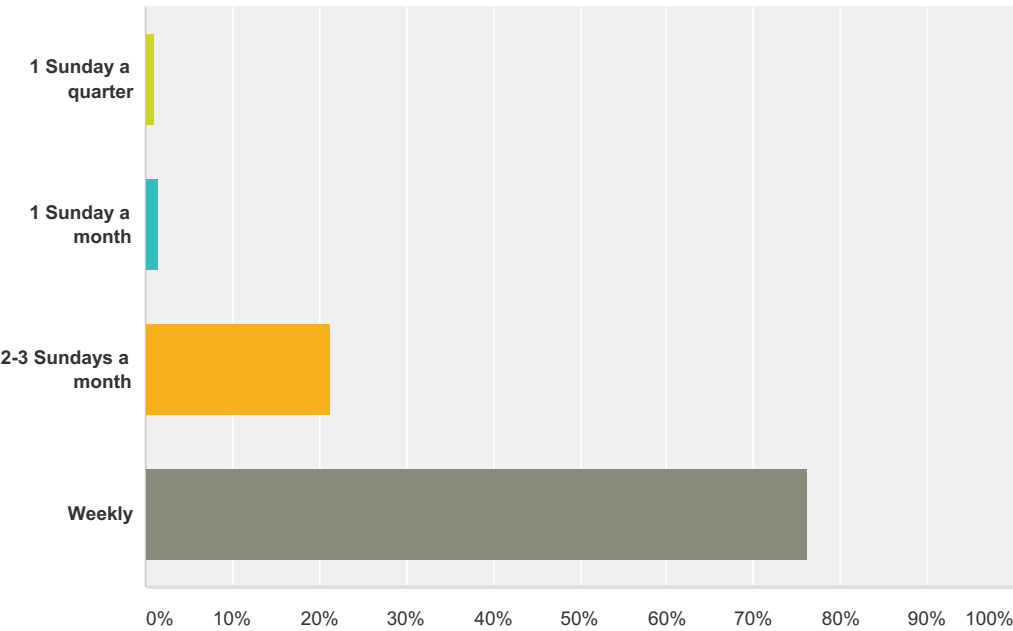
Answer Choices		Responses	
1 Sunday a quarter		**0.99%**	4
1 Sunday a month		**1.49%**	6
2-3 Sundays a month		**21.29%**	86
Weekly		**76.24%**	308
Total			**404**

Q4 In which of the following SBCC ministries do you currently participate? (check as many as apply)
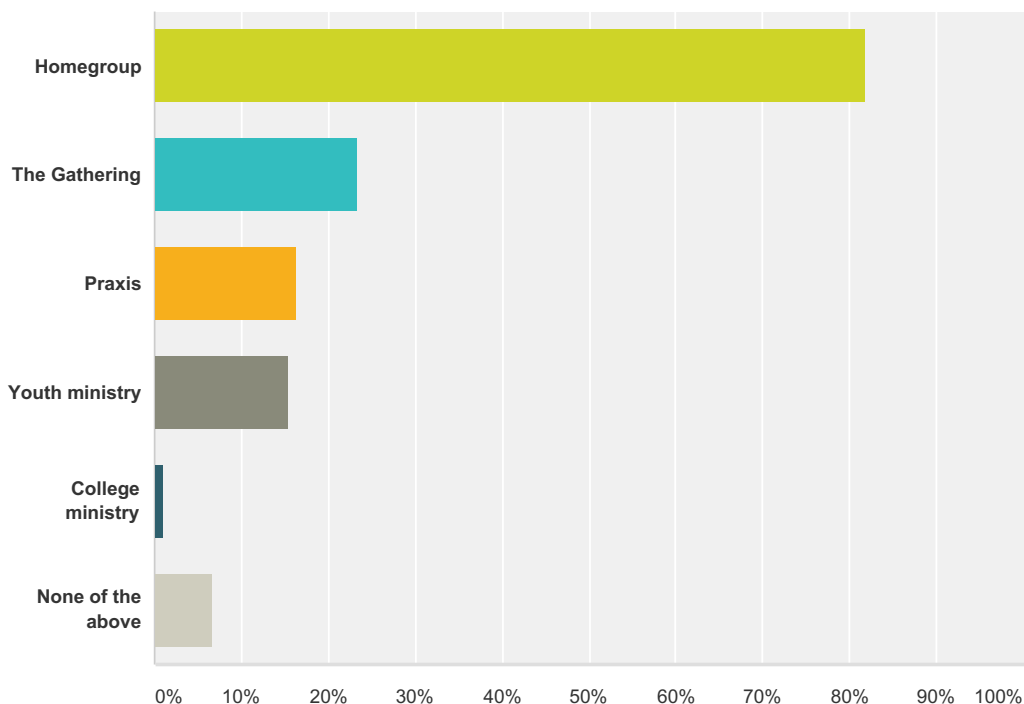
Answer Choices	Responses	
Homegroup	**81.82%**	333
The Gathering	**23.34%**	95
Praxis	**16.22%**	66
Youth ministry	**15.48%**	63
College ministry	**0.98%**	4
None of the above	**6.63%**	27
Total Respondents: 407		

Q5 In which of the following SBCC ministries do you currently serve as a leader? (check as many as apply)

Answered: 388   Skipped: 20
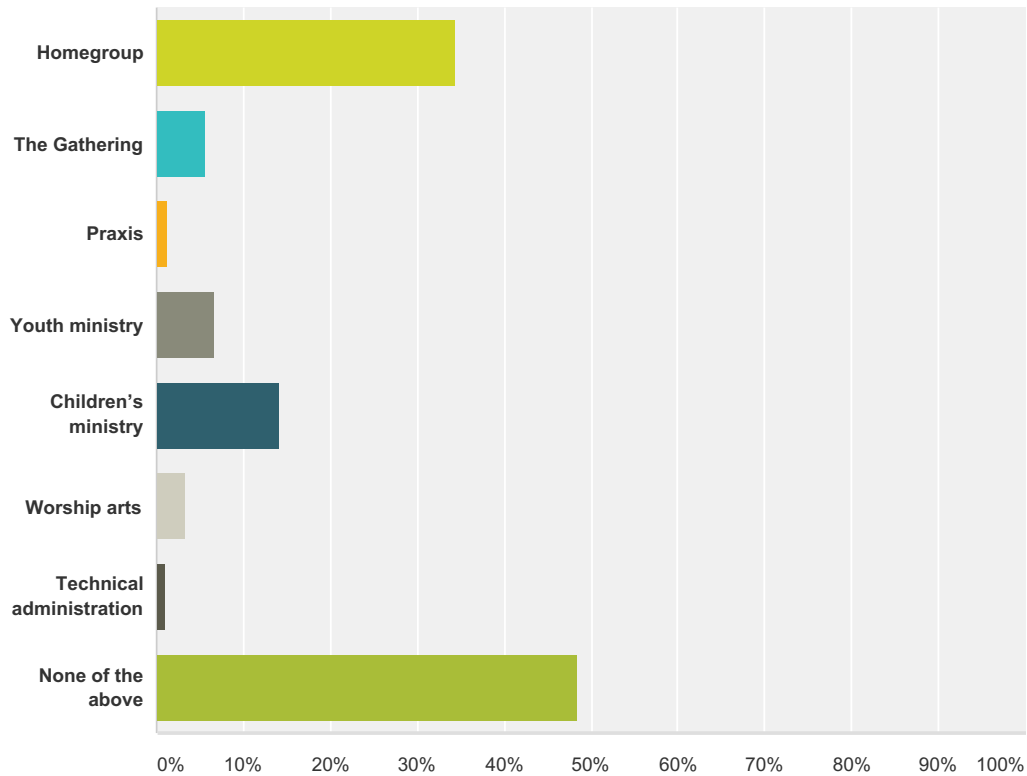
Answer Choices	Responses	
Homegroup	**34.54%**	134
The Gathering	**5.67%**	22
Praxis	**1.29%**	5
Youth ministry	**6.70%**	26
Children's ministry	**14.18%**	55
Worship arts	**3.35%**	13
Technical administration	**1.03%**	4
None of the above	**48.45%**	188
Total Respondents: 388		

Q6 Do you identify as a Christian?

Answered: 407   Skipped: 1
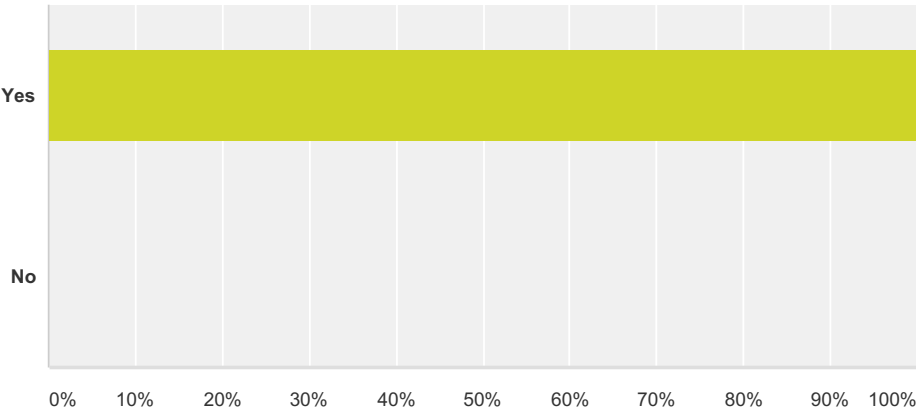
Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	**100.00%**	407
No	**0.00%**	0
Total		**407**

Q7 Prior to attending SBCC, did you identify as a Christian?

Answered: 407   Skipped: 1
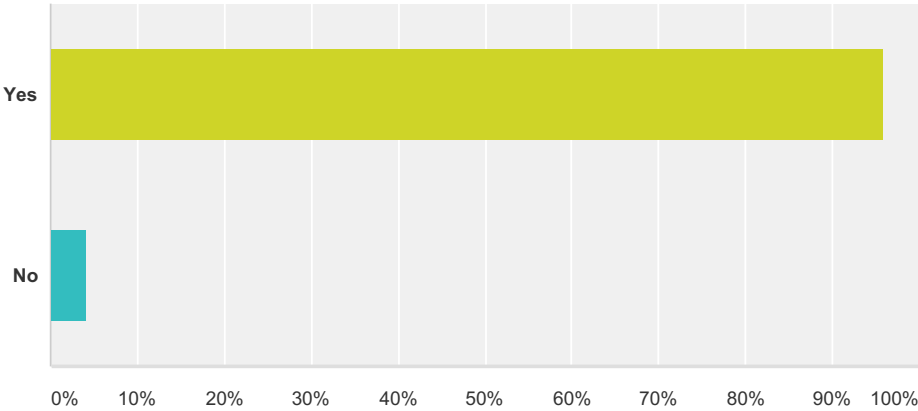
Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	**95.82%**	390
No	**4.18%**	17
Total		**407**

Q8 Prior to attending SBCC, were you involved in another church?

Answered: 407   Skipped: 1
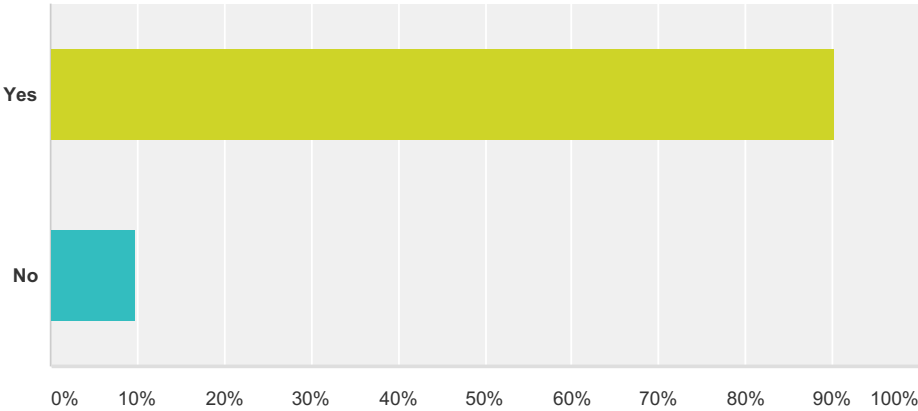
Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	**90.17%**	367
No	**9.83%**	40
Total		**407**

Q9 If yes to question 8, which of these was the primary motivator for you to change churches?

Answered: 389   Skipped: 19
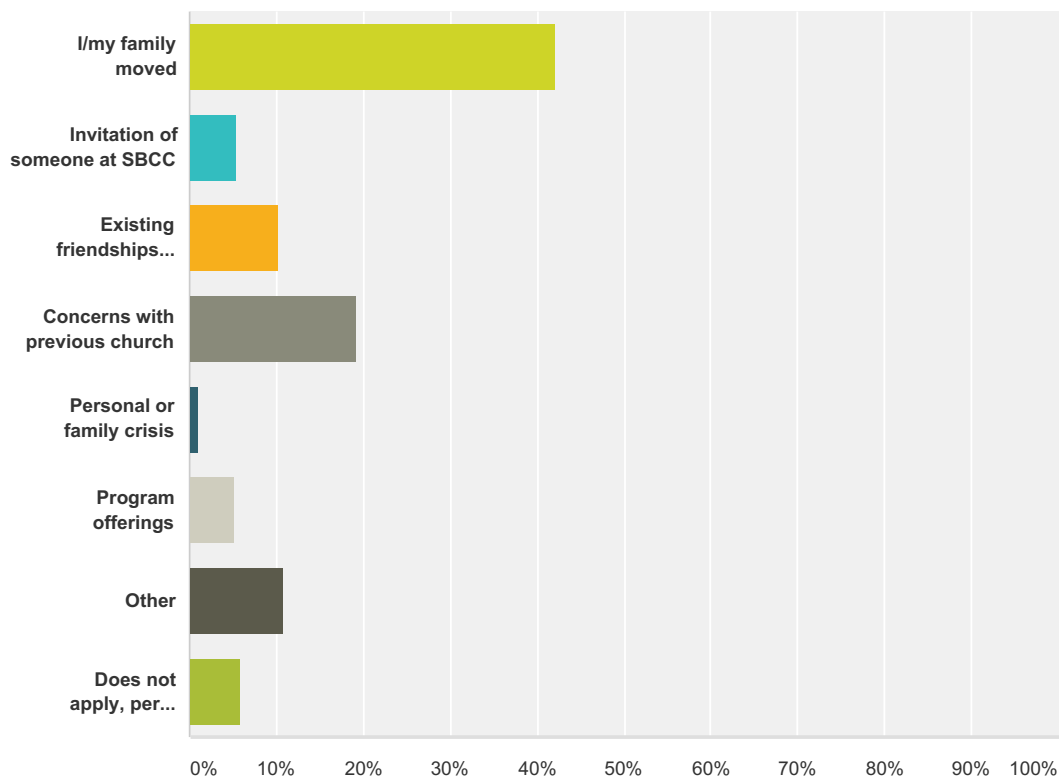
Answer Choices	Responses	
I/my family moved	**42.16%**	164
Invitation of someone at SBCC	**5.40%**	21
Existing friendships with others at SBCC	**10.28%**	40
Concerns with previous church	**19.28%**	75
Personal or family crisis	**1.03%**	4
Program offerings	**5.14%**	20
Other	**10.80%**	42
Does not apply, per question 8	**5.91%**	23
Total		**389**

Q10 If no to question 8, which of these was the primary motivator for you to begin attending SBCC?

Answered: 231   Skipped: 177
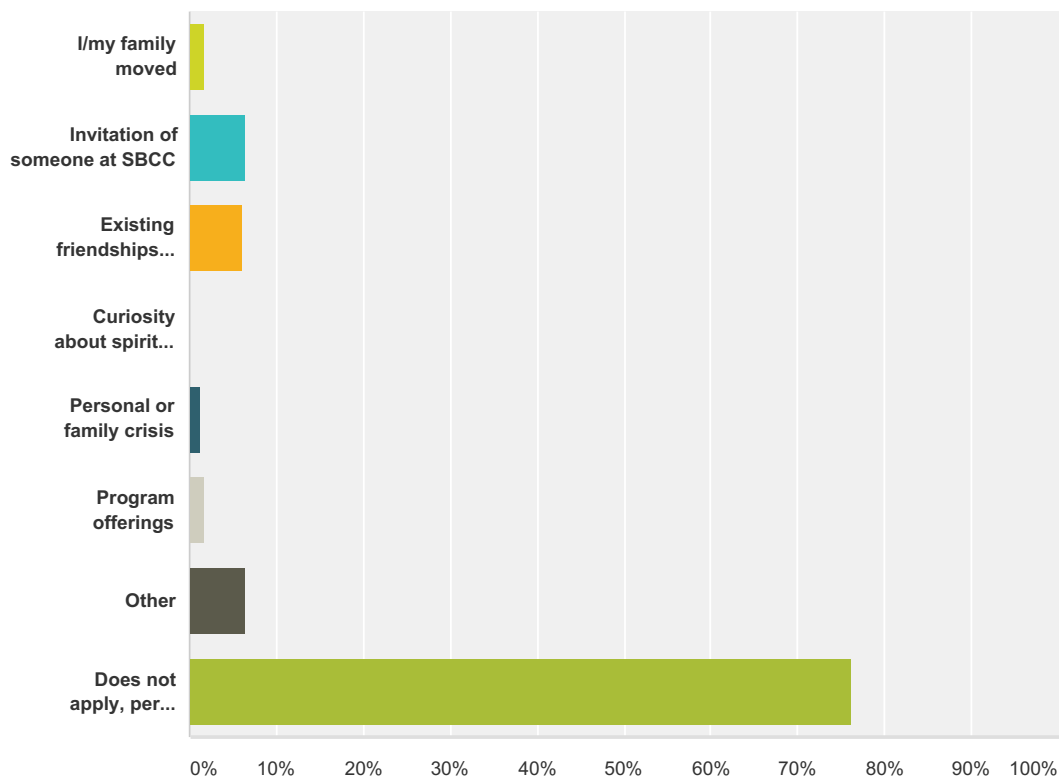
Answer Choices	Responses	
I/my family moved	**1.73%**	4
Invitation of someone at SBCC	**6.49%**	15
Existing friendships with others at SBCC	**6.06%**	14
Curiosity about spiritual things	**0.00%**	0
Personal or family crisis	**1.30%**	3
Program offerings	**1.73%**	4
Other	**6.49%**	15
Does not apply, per question 8	**76.19%**	176
Total		**231**

Q11 Which of the following was influential in your decision to attend SBCC?

Answered: 408   Skipped: 0
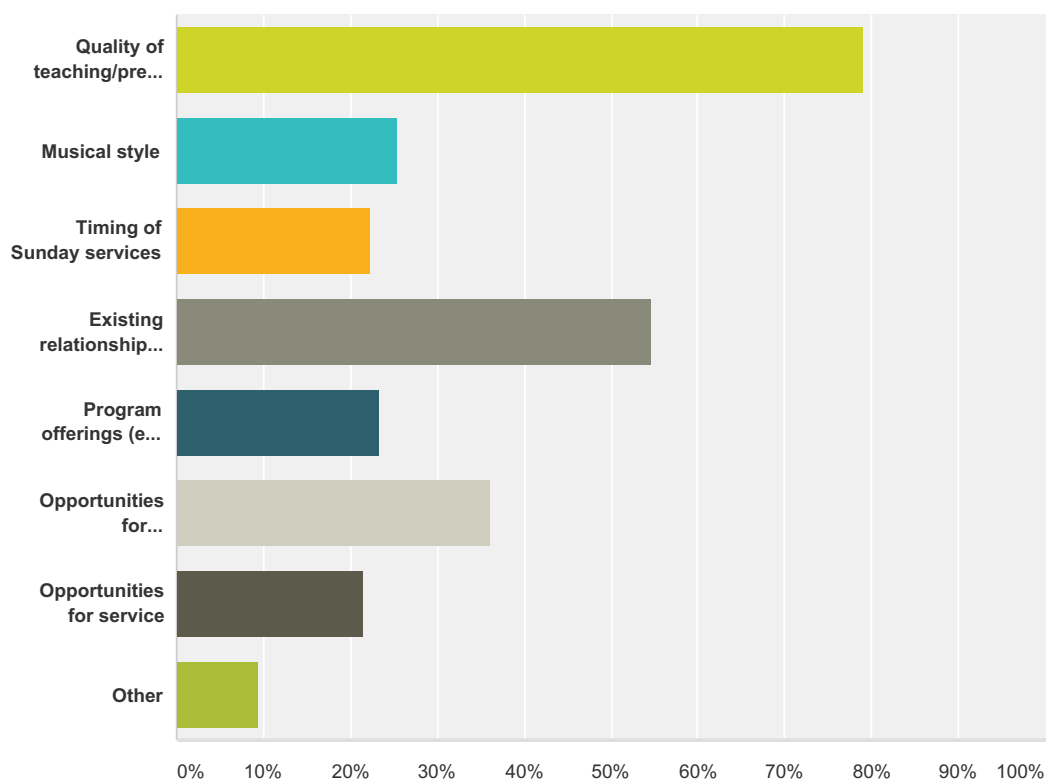
Answer Choices	Responses	
Quality of teaching/preaching	**79.17%**	323
Musical style	**25.49%**	104
Timing of Sunday services	**22.30%**	91
Existing relationships with SBCC members	**54.66%**	223
Program offerings (e.g. children's ministry, youth ministry)	**23.28%**	95
Opportunities for discipleship (e.g. homegroup)	**36.03%**	147
Opportunities for service	**21.57%**	88
Other	**9.31%**	38
Total Respondents: 408		

Q12 Do you believe that you understand the basic tenets of the Christian faith?

Answered: 407   Skipped: 1
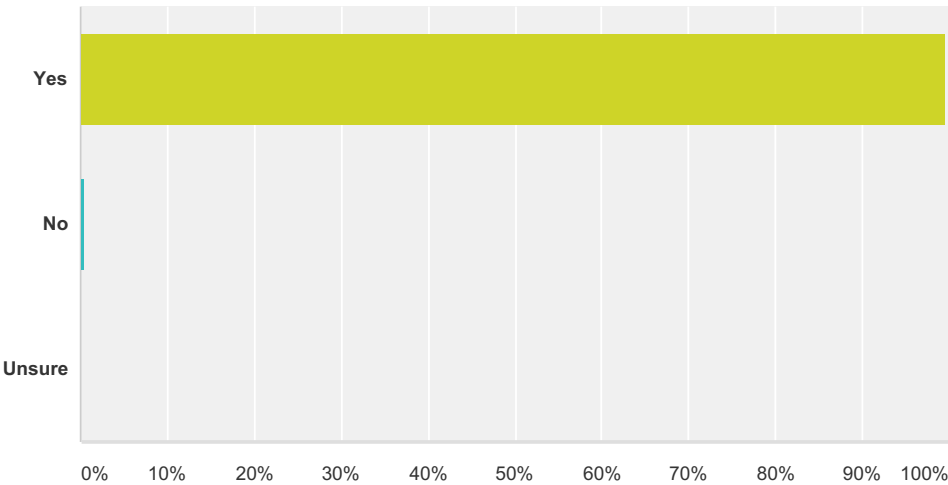
Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	**99.51%**	405
No	**0.49%**	2
Unsure	**0.00%**	0
Total		**407**

Q13 Prior to being involved at SBCC, did you understand the basic tenets of the Christian faith?

Answered: 408   Skipped: 0
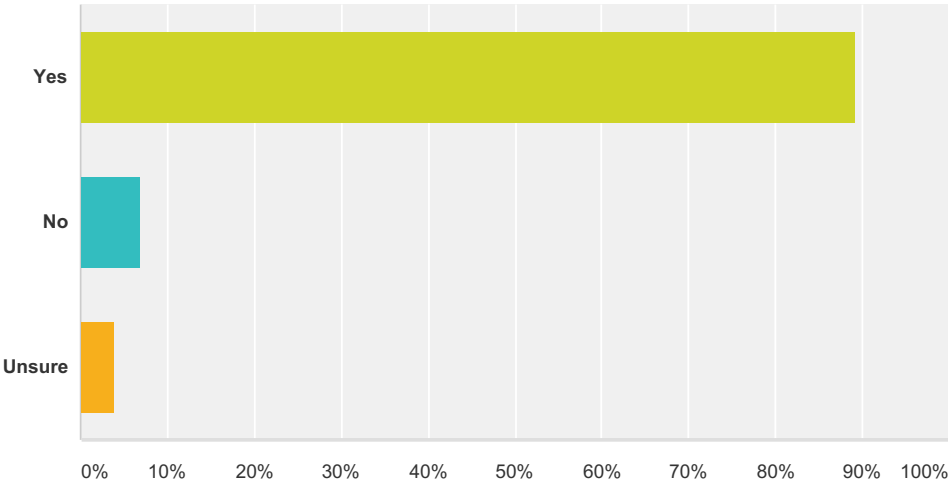
Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	**89.22%**	364
No	**6.86%**	28
Unsure	**3.92%**	16
Total		**408**

Q14 Has your time at SBCC greatly influenced your understanding of the basic tenets of the Christian faith?

Answered: 408   Skipped: 0
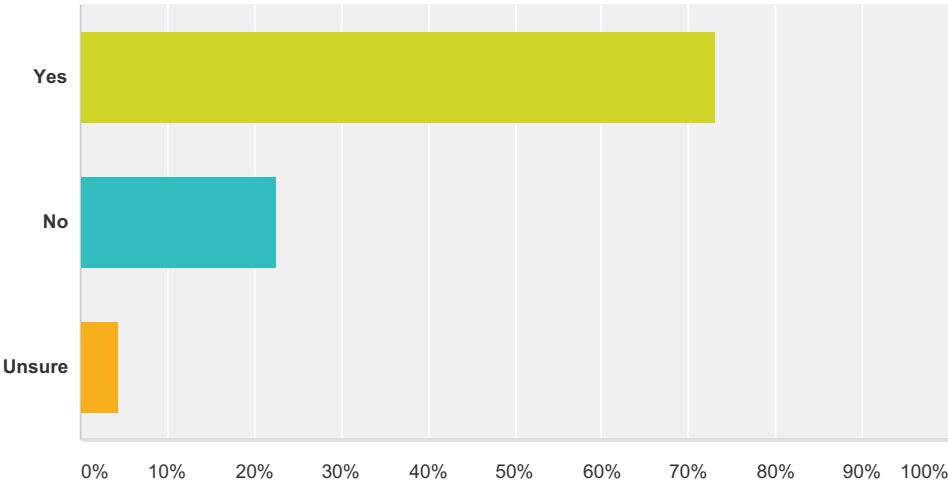
Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	**73.04%**	298
No	**22.55%**	92
Unsure	**4.41%**	18
Total		**408**

Q15 Do you believe that you can articulate the basic tenets of the Christian faith?

Answered: 408   Skipped: 0
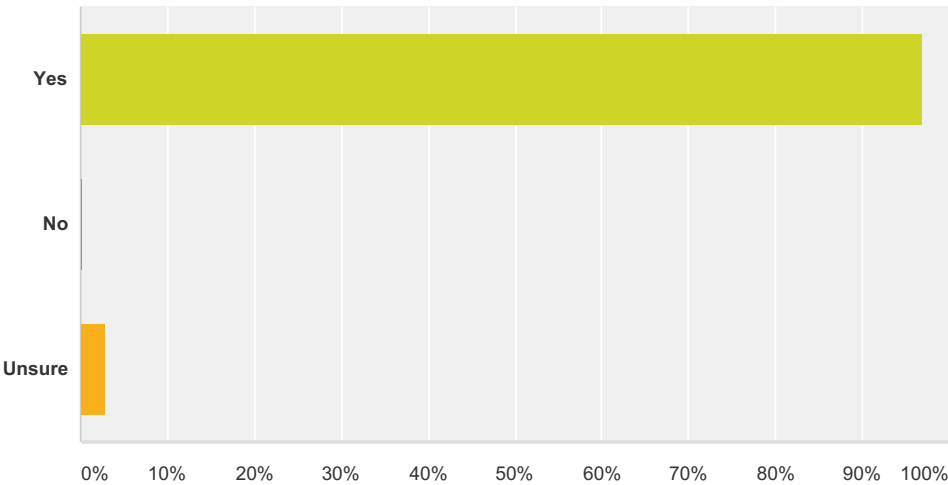
Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	**96.81%**	395
No	**0.25%**	1
Unsure	**2.94%**	12
Total		**408**

Q16 Prior to being involved at SBCC, were you able to articulate the basic tenets of the Christian faith?

Answered: 408   Skipped: 0
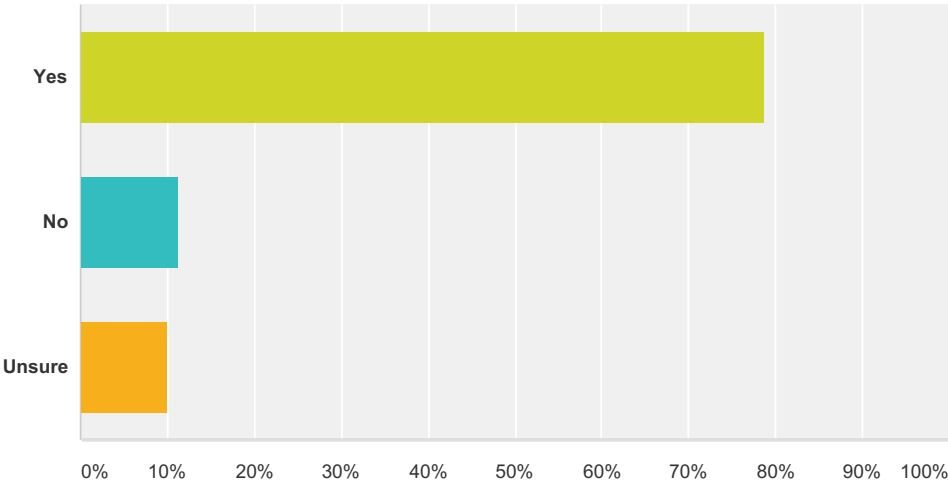
Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	**78.68%**	321
No	**11.27%**	46
Unsure	**10.05%**	41
Total		**408**

Q17 Has your time at SBCC greatly influenced your ability to articulate the basic tenets of the Christian faith?

Answered: 406   Skipped: 2
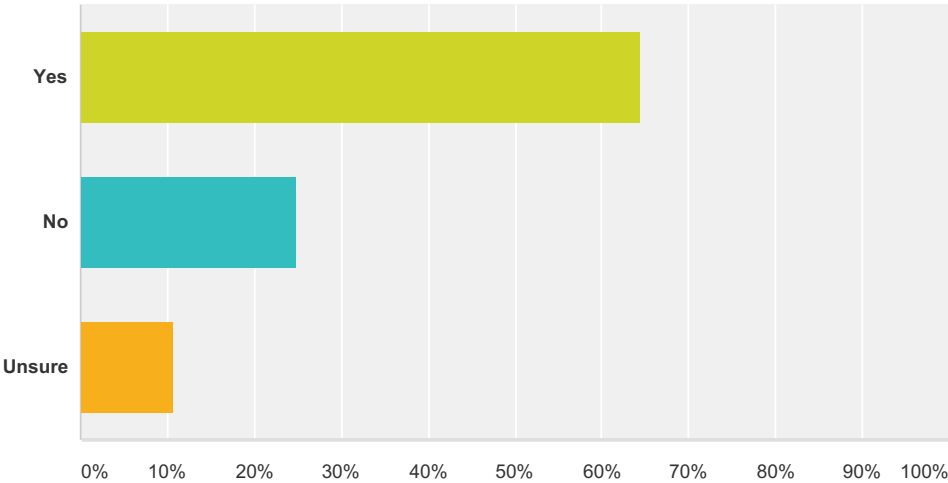
Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	**64.53%**	262
No	**24.88%**	101
Unsure	**10.59%**	43
Total		**406**

Q18 How often do you talk about your faith with those outside of SBCC?

Answered: 408   Skipped: 0
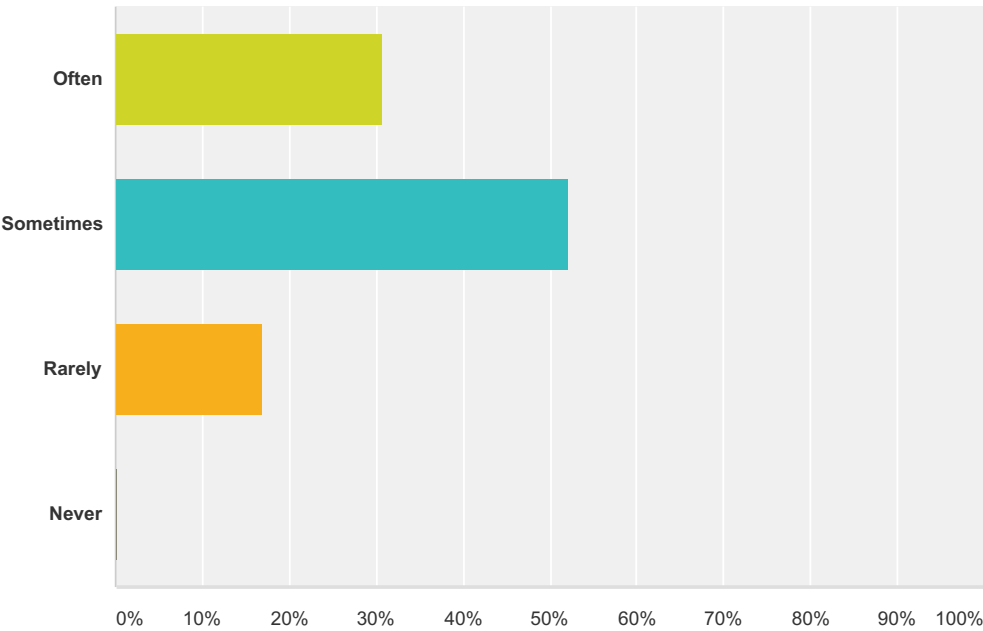
Answer Choices	Responses	
Often	**30.64%**	125
Sometimes	**52.21%**	213
Rarely	**16.91%**	69
Never	**0.25%**	1
Total		**408**

Q19 How willing would you be to invite a previously unchurched friend to SBCC?

Answered: 407   Skipped: 1
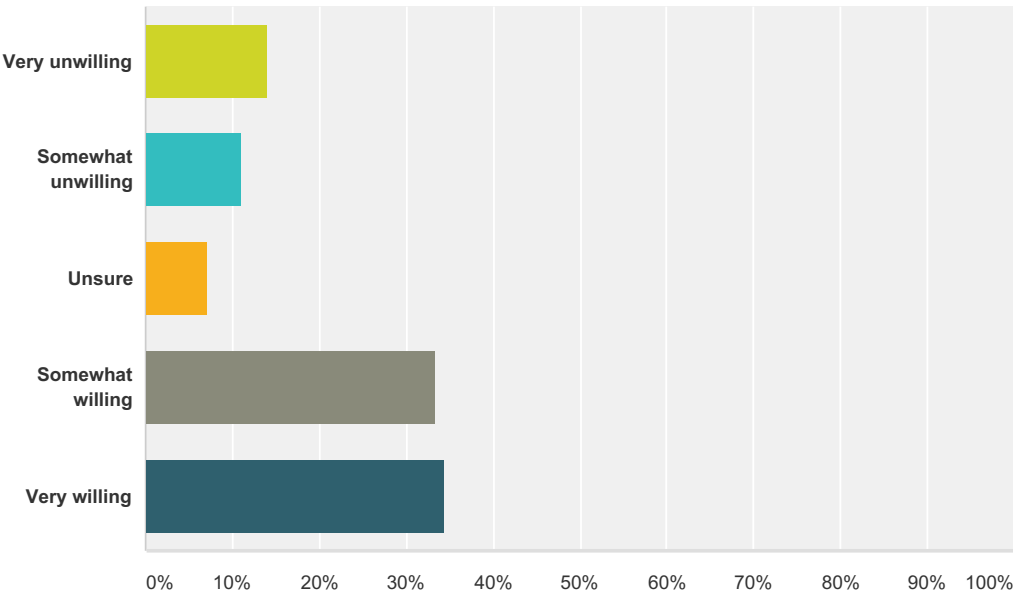
Answer Choices	Responses	
Very unwilling	**14.00%**	57
Somewhat unwilling	**11.06%**	45
Unsure	**7.13%**	29
Somewhat willing	**33.42%**	136
Very willing	**34.40%**	140
Total		407

Q20 Which of the following would be your most likely first step in introducing someone to the faith?

Answered: 408   Skipped: 0
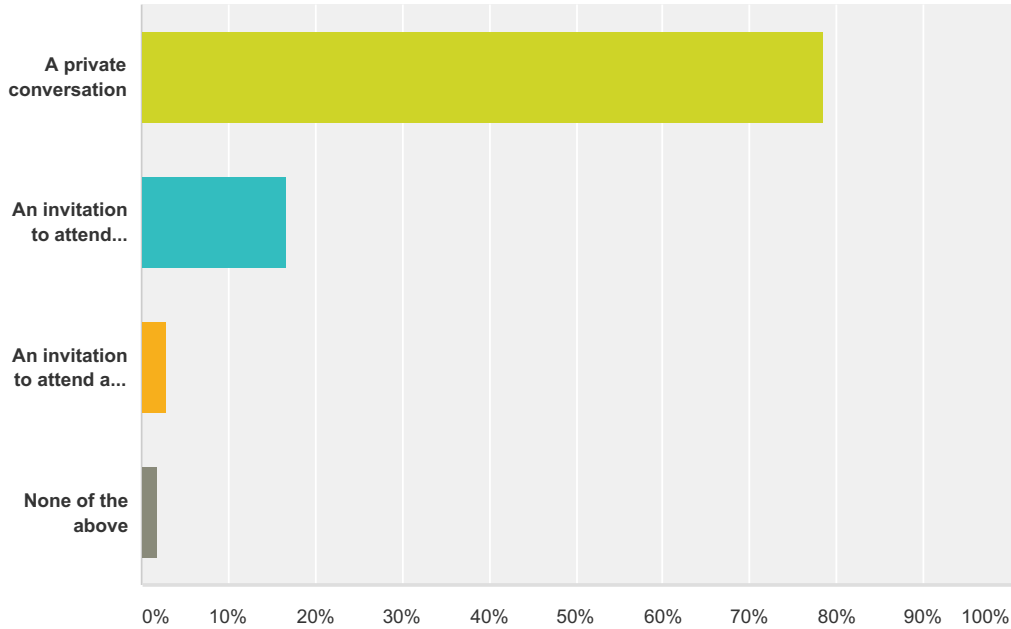
Answer Choices	Responses	
A private conversation	**78.43%**	320
An invitation to attend church	**16.67%**	68
An invitation to attend a small group	**2.94%**	12
None of the above	**1.96%**	8
Total		**408**

APPENDIX B:

SORTED CONGREGATIONAL SURVEY DATA

Q7 Prior to attending SBCC, did you identify as a Christian?

Answered: 407 Skipped: 1
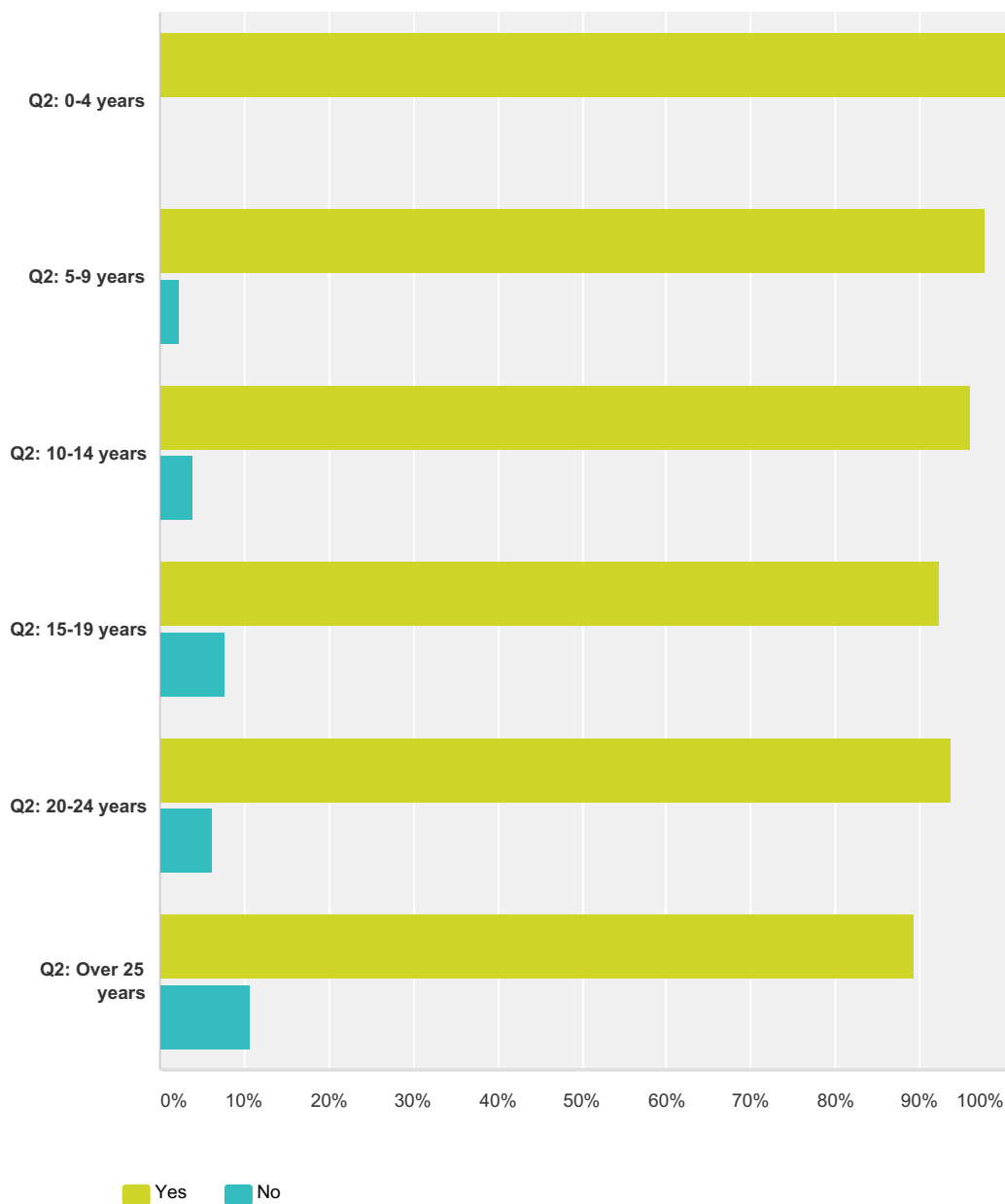
	Yes	No	Total
Q2: 0-4 years	**100.00%** 115	**0.00%** 0	**28.26%** 115
Q2: 5-9 years	**97.73%** 86	**2.27%** 2	**21.62%** 88
Q2: 10-14 years	**96.08%** 49	**3.92%** 2	**12.53%** 51
Q2: 15-19 years	**92.31%** 36	**7.69%** 3	**9.58%** 39

Q2: 20-24 years	**93.75%** 45	**6.25%** 3	**11.79%** 48
Q2: Over 25 years	**89.39%** 59	**10.61%** 7	**16.22%** 66
Total Respondents	390	17	407

Q1 What is your age group?

Answered: 57 Skipped: 0
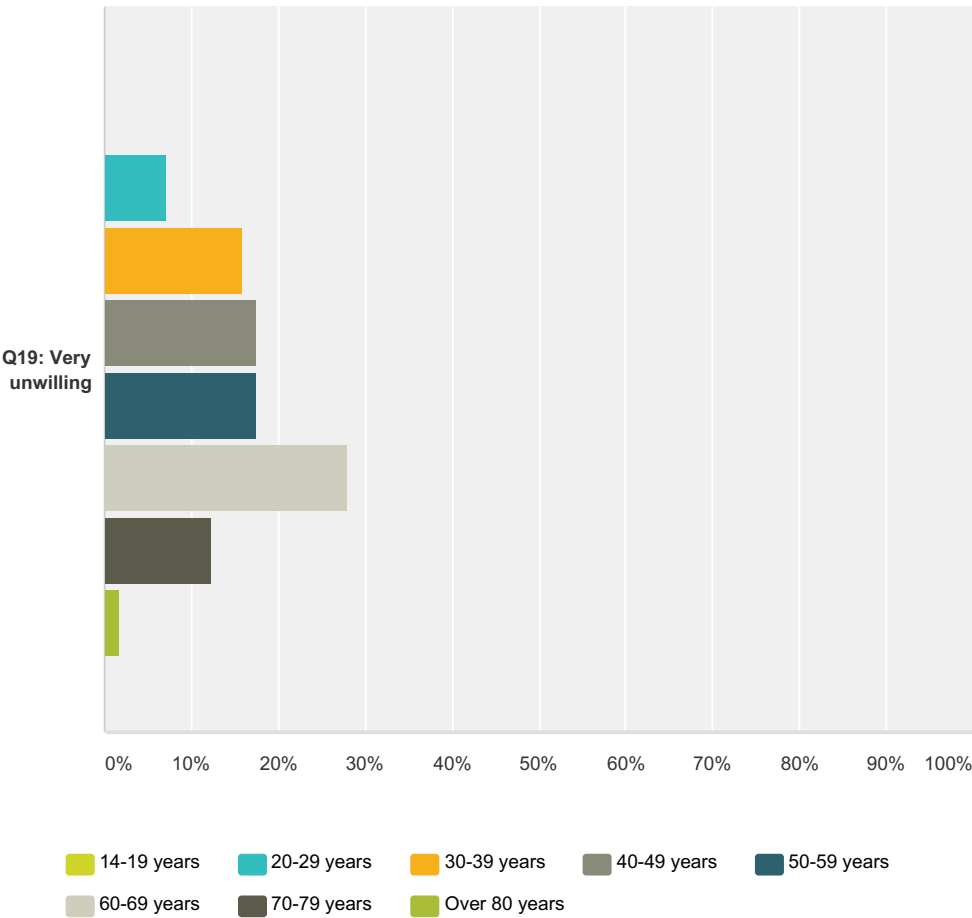
	14-19 years	20-29 years	30-39 years	40-49 years	50-59 years	60-69 years	70-79 years	Over 80 years	Total
Q19: Very unwilling	**0.00%** 0	**7.02%** 4	**15.79%** 9	**17.54%** 10	**17.54%** 10	**28.07%** 16	**12.28%** 7	**1.75%** 1	**100.00%** 57
Total Respondents	0	4	9	10	10	16	7	1	57

Q3 Which of the following best describes your typical Sunday worship attendance?

Answered: 56   Skipped: 1
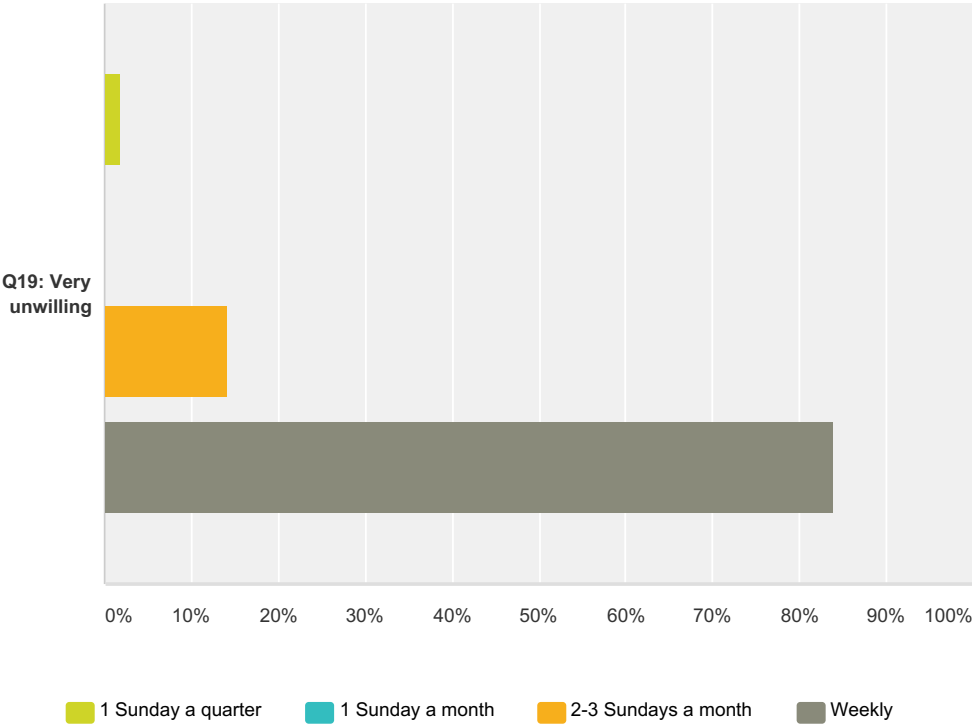
	1 Sunday a quarter	1 Sunday a month	2-3 Sundays a month	Weekly	Total
Q19: Very unwilling	**1.79%** 1	**0.00%** 0	**14.29%** 8	**83.93%** 47	**100.00%** 56
Total Respondents	1	0	8	47	56

Q4 In which of the following SBCC ministries do you currently participate? (check as many as apply)

Answered: 57   Skipped: 0
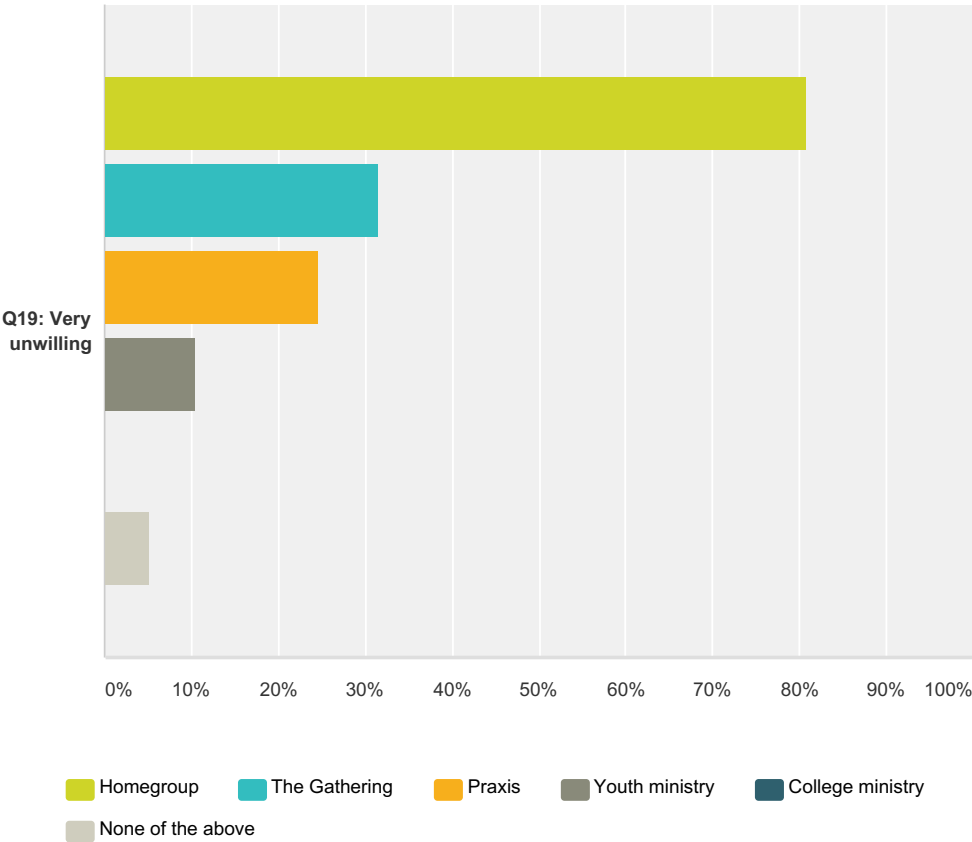
	Homegroup	The Gathering	Praxis	Youth ministry	College ministry	None of the above	Total
Q19: Very unwilling	**80.70%** 46	**31.58%** 18	**24.56%** 14	**10.53%** 6	**0.00%** 0	**5.26%** 3	**152.63%** 87
Total Respondents	46	18	14	6	0	3	57

Q5 In which of the following SBCC ministries do you currently serve as a leader? (check as many as apply)

Answered: 55   Skipped: 2
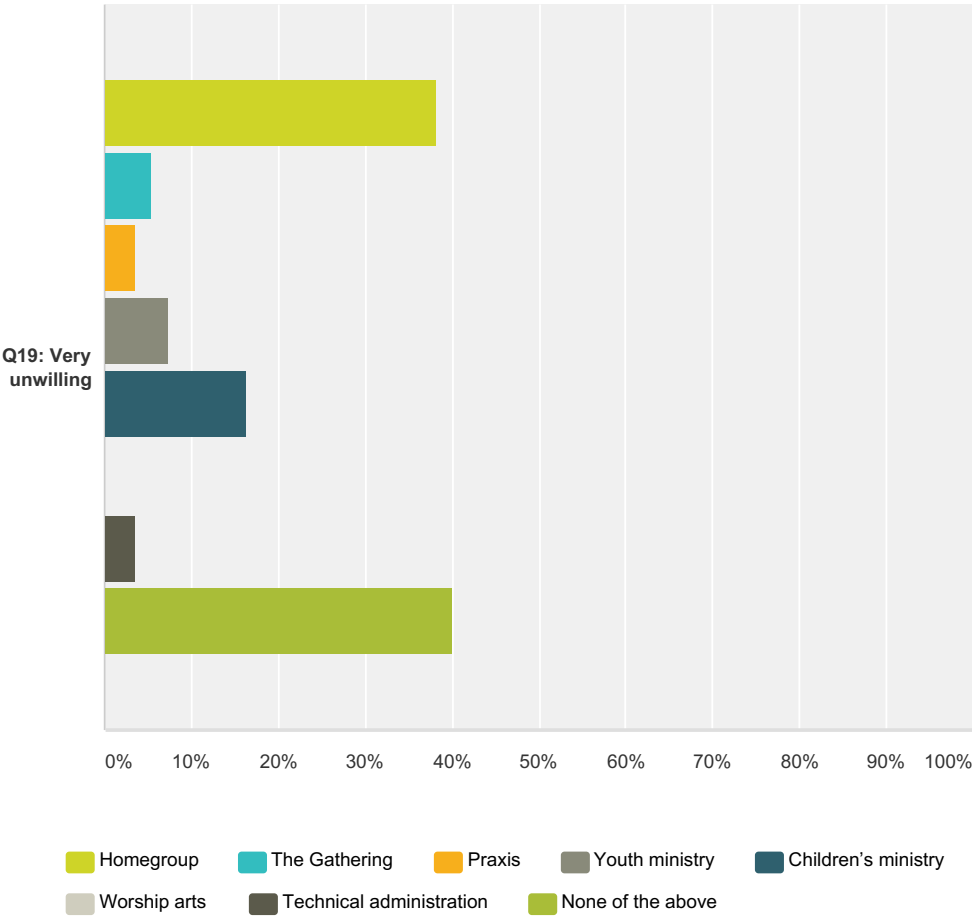
	Homegroup	The Gathering	Praxis	Youth ministry	Children's ministry	Worship arts	Technical administration	None of the above	Total
Q19: Very unwilling	**38.18%** 21	**5.45%** 3	**3.64%** 2	**7.27%** 4	**16.36%** 9	**0.00%** 0	**3.64%** 2	**40.00%** 22	**114.55%** 63
Total Respondents	21	3	2	4	9	0	2	22	55

Q11 Which of the following was influential in your decision to attend SBCC?

Answered: 57   Skipped: 0
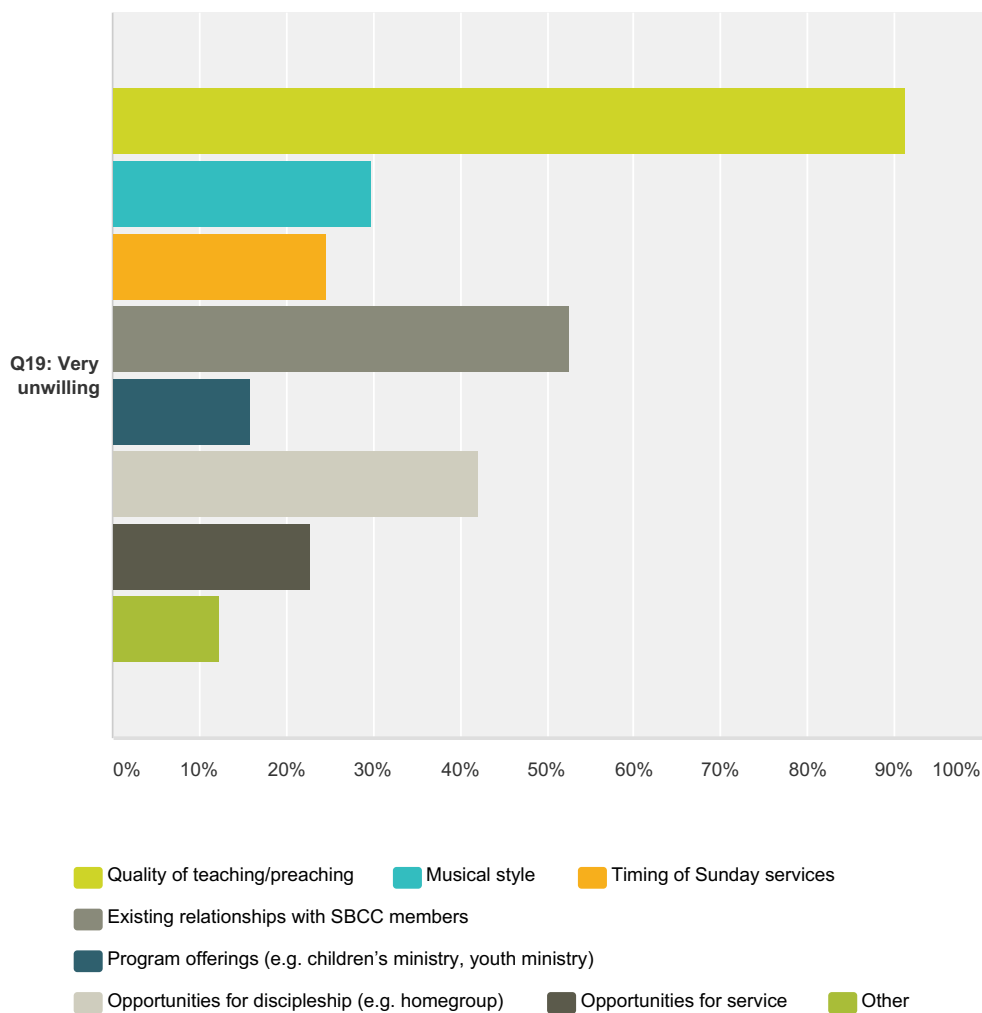
- Quality of teaching/preaching
- Musical style
- Timing of Sunday services
- Existing relationships with SBCC members
- Program offerings (e.g. children's ministry, youth ministry)
- Opportunities for discipleship (e.g. homegroup)
- Opportunities for service
- Other

	Quality of teaching/preaching	Musical style	Timing of Sunday services	Existing relationships with SBCC members	Program offerings (e.g. children's ministry, youth ministry)	Opportunities for discipleship (e.g. homegroup)	Opportunities for service	Other	Total
Q19: Very unwilling	**91.23%** 52	**29.82%** 17	**24.56%** 14	**52.63%** 30	**15.79%** 9	**42.11%** 24	**22.81%** 13	**12.28%** 7	**291.23%** 166
Total Respondents	52	17	14	30	9	24	13	7	57

Q2 How long have you attended Santa Barbara Community Church?

Answered: 57   Skipped: 0
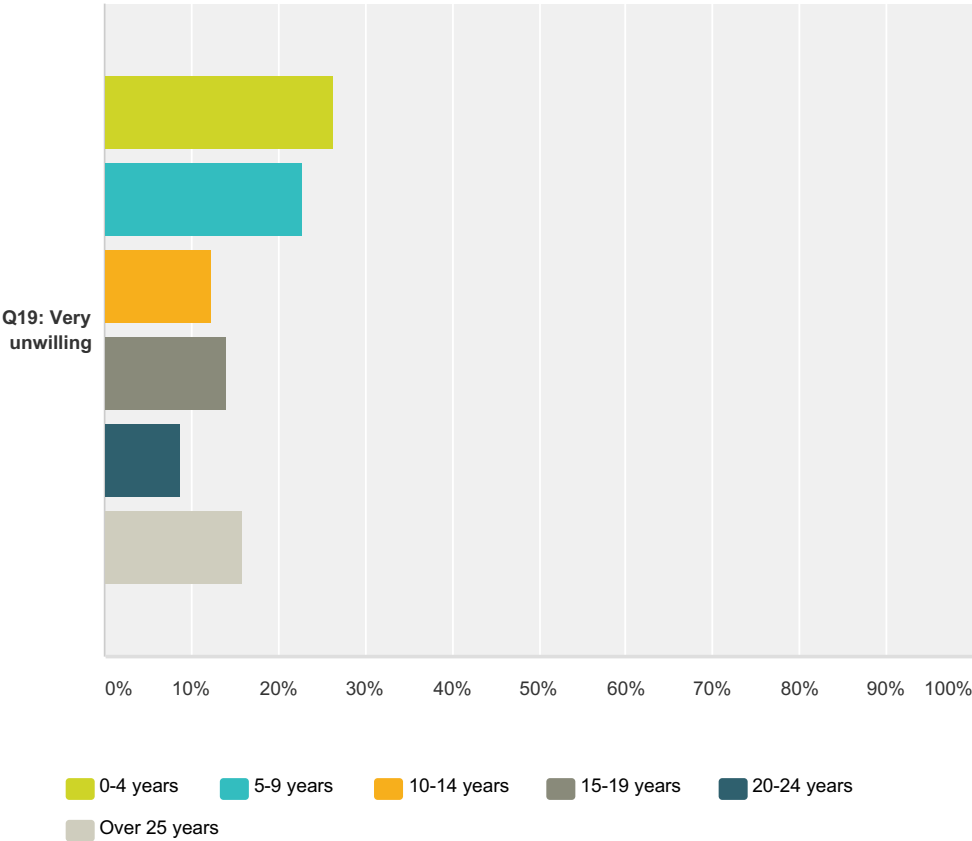
	0-4 years	5-9 years	10-14 years	15-19 years	20-24 years	Over 25 years	Total
Q19: Very unwilling	**26.32%** 15	**22.81%** 13	**12.28%** 7	**14.04%** 8	**8.77%** 5	**15.79%** 9	**100.00%** 57
Total Respondents	15	13	7	8	5	9	57

APPENDIX C:

VISION FRAME INPUT MATERIALS

Business/City Officials

Kristen Miller – Goleta Chamber of Commerce ED

- Businesses growing are hospitality, retail and professional (finance, etc.) Shrinking is the middle class; small business, insurance etc.
- Businesses doing well are software and bio-med. Also we are the infarred capital of the world.
- Challenge is finding a qualified workforce.
  - We have no middle class and low income can't afford housing.
  - Housing is not moving. No turnover with Seniors living in 5 bedroom homes.
  - Regulations continue to slow growth.
- Biggest challenges are finding ways to work around housing.
- Tension between the business community, the City Council (government) and the community. All about growth.
- Church help, probably with housing.
  - Churches have land. Is there a way for that land to help solve the housing crisis?
  - Renters are constantly moving because housing changes and that impacts schools.
  - Need easy transfer within K-6 schools.

Bill McFadden – Owner/Publisher Noozhawk

- Business are doing fine. Service sector is major employer.
- General discussion:
  - Culturally SB not a church-going community. If any of the churches left, not sure anyone would notice. Churches should be more collaborative. If he publishes an article supportive of Christian values, he gets dozens of emails in opposition. No other subject solicits that response. We have lost the ability to have the conversation.
  - Faith-based community events:
    - Clean-up lower east side
    - Santa Maria does a ministry outreach, similar to the United Way Day of Caring, but in the name of Christ.
    - Are there other opportunities, but combined churches?

Interview Questions:
1. What are some of the biggest challenges in our city when it comes to waste management?
2. Do you see potential pitfalls in the way churches steward the environment?
3. What is a small habit people can/should adopt to reduce their waste?
4. As a church, how could we better steward our resources? If we could do one thing, what would you say is the most important?
5. Have you seen other churches in Santa Barbara do things particularly well? If so, what have you seen?

Hillary Allen
City of Santa Barbara Trash & Recycle Coordinator

NOTES
What are some of the biggest challenges in our city when it comes to waste management?
- Education - people misunderstand how things work and make poor decisions & are ignorant. People think they know how to properly dispose but it changes every year. We should be keeping up to date and constantly shifting and improving habits.
- We use WAY too much single use. People think they are recycling when they aren't. Trash just isn't talked about enough. People shy away from it because it's uncomfortable. It's a systemic part of our culture and society and really can't be avoided,

Do you see potential pitfalls in the way churches steward the environment? What is a small habit people can/should adopt to reduce their waste?
- Churches assume it has to be a huge initiative, when it reality change comes from small culture shifts. Single use should be entirely eliminated as much as feasible. In church specifically: coffee cups, water bottles, other large event disposables.
- Bulletins should ALWAYS be recycled. Paper in the landfill is one of the methane gas contributors. Look for ways to reduce the number of bulletins you are printing. Don't give one to every person-- simply have them out for people to grab as an option if they want one.

As a church, how could we better steward our resources? If we could do one thing, what would you say is the most important?
- Start small. Have a training after church for people to learn how to properly dispose. Encourage small habit. You will have push back. People are afraid of change. Stay the course. Do it now. Do it today.

Have you seen other churches in Santa Barbara do things particularly well? If so, what have you seen?
- She has seen a huge shift in the church community this past year. Trinity Episcopal is doing things well because they are receptive and making small changes (reducing # of bulletins printed, etc) The biggest work is the little stuff. Trinity is open to change & new ideas and have spent many years really working at stuff. It can start small.

Initiative for Public Dialogue - Waste Management
April 1, 2019 WIPD

NOTES

Topic: *What we should do about the trash we produce and how we dispose of it.*

Problem:

- The City of Santa Barbara has a population density of 2,100 people per square mile, and an estimated overall population of 92,000 (up from 88,400 in 2010). The County of Santa Barbara (inclusive of Goleta, Carpinteria, Montecito & Summerland), has a population of more than 425,000.Plastics and other single use items that aren't properly disposed of are ending up in our ocean, as litter on the beaches and sit in the landfill for hundreds of years without decomposing. Thousands of microplastics are found in the ocean and are even ending up in our food! According to The Washington post, by 2015, there will be more plastic in the ocean than fish. Our local Tajiguas landfill is filling up at a rapid rate. Santa Barbara County estimates that almost ⅓ could be diverted elsewhere. The Tajiguas Resource Recovery Project has a "material recycling facility" of over 5.8 acres, which is aimed at removing recyclables and organic matter that have been put into regular trash bins collected for the dump. They have been able to divert 60% of waste from the landfill. This represents the single largest reduction of greenhouse emissions in Santa Barbara County, equal to taking 24,000 cars off the road. The good news is that their efforts are making a difference; the bad news is that people are still sending 60% of what could be recycled into their regular trash. This problem should not be overlooked.

Potential Solutions:

- The forum posed three potential solutions to discuss:
  - Educate people for responsible choices about consumption and trash (trainings, business audits, encourage consumers, etc)
  - Set new standards and put the environment first (mandate a residential composting problem, support taxes to ban certain plastics, etc)
  - Allow consumers & businesses to drive innovation & problem solving (community beach cleanups, encourage businesses to innovate alternative single use items, etc)

- Other Highlights:
  - Coffee cups can't be recycled in Santa Barbara. How can Santa Barbara be better about using less coffee cups or going compostable?
  - Composting should be a given for homeowners and businesses. Santa Barbara has a commercialized composting program.
  - Community wide beach cleanups should be encouraged/incentivised

Jacob Grant
Oceanhills Sustainability Advocate

NOTES

What are some of the biggest challenges in our city when it comes to waste management?

- One of the biggest challenges is that of education. So many people want to recycle, compost, and be more conscious consumers but have generations of ingrained habits - including, but not limited to - ignorance. Many people are overwhelmed and are afraid of doing something wrong, so they stick with what they know.

Do you see potential pitfalls in the way churches steward the environment?

- Yes, I mean, just unpacking Church stewardship is a huge conversation. Many use scripture to support "dominion" over the earth while others counter with the "stewardship" model. This division has led to exasperation for many evangelicals when it comes to this conversation which causes them to retreat or defer for the sake of avoiding conflict. For others, religion is a purely spiritual engagement with little physical implications.

What is a small habit people can/should adopt to reduce their waste?

- I think that everyone can compost their food waste and collect shower water with a bucket while they wait for it to heat up. The compost and water can both be used to water and fertilize a garden or landscape, thus cutting down on water expenses and beautifying your garden!! Win win. Okay, another small - easy thing... keep reusable grocery bags in your car to use every time you go to the store to prevent accumulating plastic or paper bags unnecessarily.

As a church, how could we better steward our resources? If we could do one thing, what would you say is the most important?

- As a church, it starts with understanding that we are not entitled to our resources. Once we see the importance of bringing God's Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven as a physical mandate and not just a moral one, then we will be better founded to prioritize a sustainable lifestyle. People who do not care about the environment on a moral level will be hard pressed to actually do anything for the environment.
- So, the most important step is changing mindsets. Out of that flows a heart and hand posture that is more willing to trade in compulsive shopping, discarding of waste that can be reused or repurposed, and mass consumption (etc.)

Have you seen other churches in Santa Barbara do things particularly well? If so, what have you seen?

- There are unfortunately few churches in the area that are really embracing a sustainable approach. However, small changes are being made in contemplating the type of food used for events (and the resulting waste), recycle and compost bins, solar panels, and educating church members to embrace sustainability. Some churches do clothing or furniture drives which is also a great way to prevent perfectly good materials from being thrown into a landfill. I hope and work towards a reality where Churches fully embrace the mission of Christ in a social, moral, personal, justice, and sustainable way!

Takeaways & Action Steps

As Christians, we are called to be coworkers with Christ who bear God's image. With that crazy role, comes a responsibly and an opportunity to steward our earth. How cool if we were a church that lived out this mandate and sought to not only avoid harmful environmental practices, but also to adopt measures that actually give back to the environment.

1. *Education*
   - *Training*. Hillary Allen offered to do a free training for our church on how to properly dispose. I see this as a great starting point! We will happily organize this.
2. *Waste Management*
   - Bulletins
     - *Recycle.* Ensure that we have a recycle bin for all bulletins. Have someone go through the sanctuary after each service to gather and properly recycle.
     - *Reduce.* Only give bulletins to people who want them. See if we can cut down on the number we are printing.

   - Single Use
     - *Reduce.* Avoid single use items on Sunday mornings. What if we encouraged everyone to bring their own coffee cup? We could significantly eliminate our waste on Sunday mornings. This would also spur healthy habits outside of church.
     - *Replace.* For disposables that are necessary, shift to compostable. Slightly more expensive but significantly more responsible.
3. *Conservation*
   - Water.
     - Santa Barbara is one of the first cities to offer free water audits. A county representative will come in and assess current water fixtures (toilet, sink, etc) to inform SBCC of where both water and financial savings are possible. This could be a cool program to take advantage of!
     - Contact Cathie Pare, Water Resources Specialist to schedule free audit. (805) 564-5593
4. *Responsible Purchases*
   - Start Small. Switch over to a local, environmentally responsible coffee vendor. Consider: (https://www.vegacoffee.com/account/login)
   - Supplies. Commit to purchase only environmentally responsible items for large gatherings, events and children's ministry. Consider (https://www.rawoffice.com/)

Thoughts for the Future:

1. *Revitalize the farm*
   - This land is a gift and we have the unique opportunity to steward it well. A first step could be as simple as getting a team of people together to brainstorm some ways that we can affordably and effectively bring this land back to life.

Other Simple Habits for Responsible Living *(much of this would be included in a training)*

1. *Reduce your packaging purchases:*
   a. Use your own reusable bags and containers;
   b. Consider using beeswax cloths (available at any health food store or Trader Joe's) to
   c. cover your dishes, instead of plastic wrap;
   d. Buy large economy-sized products instead of individually wrapped items. (And church,
   e. please do away with purchasing plastic water bottles.) By concentrates that can be diluted, for cleaning, etc.
2. *Reduce your paper junk:*
   a. Stop unwanted phone book delivery;
   b. Stop unwanted junk mail: In 1990 Americans threw away 418,000 tons of unopened junk mail! Getting it stopped takes a little time, but is worth the effort. Call or write the organizations that keep sending it and ask them to remove you from their mailing lists (you can even use their pre-paid return envelopes to make this request if they provide them). If a toll-free number is provided, use that; Return unwanted mail;Contact mailing list brokers and ask to be put on their "suppress" files.
3. *Reduce your organic trash:*
   a. Begin backyard composting. Everything from teabags, coffee & filters, paper towels, food and garden waste can be composted.
   b. If you do not want to compost food waste, most waste management companies will provide a separate bin for regular pick-up.
   c. Reduce Toxicity:
   d. When possible, use non-hazardous (or less hazardous) materials at home and work. In the garden, utilize Integrated Pest Management (IPM) techniques to control insects and other pests.
   e. Dispose of hazardous materials properly
4. *Reuse:*
   a. Always carry reusable shopping bags for store purchases;
   b. Bring reusable mugs to coffee shops;
   c. Bring reusable containers to restaurants for doggie-bags;
   d. Pack lunches in reusable containers;
   e. Reuse single-sided printed paper for scratch pads;
   f. Reuse plastic containers for storage, clothes for rags or "upcycling" projects.
5. *Borrow, rent or share:*
   a. Power tools, ladders, garden equipment;
   b. Audiovisual equipment;
   c. Party equipment (chairs/tables, etc)

<u>**COMMUNITY INTERVIEWS:**</u>

Law Enforcement and Homelessness

SBPD Officer Keld Hove

<u>Background:</u> SBPD Officer for 20+ years, martial arts expert, breadmaker, and currently runs the Restorative Court

- Restorative Court = a track within the SB Criminal Justice System that deals with the 25 most problematic/chronic homeless individuals who are charged with low-level crimes such as public intoxication, illegal lodging, simple alcohol/drug offenses, trespassing, etc.
- Officer Hove deals with the individuals at the bottom rung of the downtown SB community
- His goal is simply to get them off the street and connected with services so that they stop going in/out of the revolving door, costing thousands for the City of SB and taxpayers, and causing a drain on resources for the SBPD and SB Courts. He considers it a success when he can advance them one rung up the ladder from the bottom.
- Causes include mental health issues, substance abuse, community of folks who are like-minded (living on the street with the same issues), etc.

<u>Church Involvement:</u>

- Get involved with the homeless community. Offer a handshake and point of connection – they want someone to tell their story to. Avoid simple handouts. Had mixed reviews of our homeless feeding programs – when we finish serving a meal, we leave and the large gathering of homeless individuals tends to erupt into some sort of disturbance that the SBPD has to sort out.
- Provide housing. Nobody can/will put these folks up because of rules about drinking and certain behavior. What they need is a place with fewer rules where they can live their homeless "lifestyle" off the street. Become less of a problem for the community and more likely to receive services to help with mental health and substance abuse issues.

Law Enforcement and Human Trafficking

SB District Attorney's Office Victim-Witness Coordinator Rita McGaw

<u>Background:</u> Rita is an integral part of the SB Task Force on human trafficking, comprised of folks from the community, law enforcement agencies, District Attorney's Office, and others.

<u>Church Involvement:</u>

- The Task Force is new, still figuring out how to pool resources and best bring them to bear in this developing area, but there is lots of room for churches to get involved.
- Jeff Schaeffer, who runs SBACT (see their website), is gathering faith-based organizations to get involved with those rescued from human trafficking (I am trying to get an interview with him).

ALL FOR NOW. MORE TO DOCUMENT AND MORE INTERVIEWS TO CONDUCT.

Housing/Real Estate

Samantha Ireland

Samantha is very close to the housing issues facing Santa Barbara. As owner of Vacation Rentals of Santa Barbara, and a Keller Williams agent, she has an interesting perspective. Often housing transplants in vacation rentals as they look for permanent housing she notes that School district, cost, housing amenities are important. With inter-district transfers more difficult, school district is high on the list of considerations. She also notes that mortgages and rents aren't that far apart when comparing similar product. The challenge for first time home buyers is the down payment. Most of the buyers she comes in contact with are moving to, or leaving Santa Barbara for work reasons and are Millennials or GenXers.

Mickey Flacks

I was not able to meet with Mickey. However, I have worked alongside her in community efforts to encourage new housing development. I would say Mickey's primary focus with regard to housing is to stimulate more low income housing. She has participated in the City's AUD (average unit density) discussion. The links above can provide more perspective on here high level perspective on the housing issue.

Rob Kooyman

Rob is the owner of Meridian Group Real Estate. He and his wife have raised their kids here, most of whom are now out of the house. Rob's company focuses primarily on residential property management and he had these things to share:

- People move to SB for all of the obvious reasons - work, school and its a beautiful place.
- Young couples are challenged to buy as the down payment is difficult to raise. Often a mortgage payment is about what the rent would be for the same unit.
- Renters are not so discriminate on location as most areas in SB, Goleta and Carpinteria are nice. With limited supply, renters look primarily to price to make their decision.
- Fewer renters looking for a school district as transfers at upper school grades are easy?
- Prime neighborhoods are not as much a factor.
- Rents have been fairly flat recently and there has been some downward pressure on apartment sales.

Brad Frohling
> Partner at Radius Group Real Estate
> Westmont Foundation Board of Directors
> Hillside House Board Chair
> Developer/Owner of a multi unit student house project

Brad has been engaged with commercial real estate for over 20 years in SB. He and Cynthia have raised their two daughters here and they understand the challenges facing first time home owners and renters through their personal experiences as well as the experiences of their daughters and this generation of young people looking to rent or buy. Here are a couple of the thoughts Brad shared with me:

- We should expect to have a larger percentage of transient residents because of the student population and the high barriers to entry for those without monetary wealth. They simply can't or don't want to stick around.
- SB is an expensive place to work and live, and that is not likely to change. It is simply not a good goal to try and house everyone who wants to live here.
- In his opinion, when considering the vacant church property the Elders should be careful not to try and be developers, but stick to mission. On the other hand, he feels it could be serving a greater purpose. Partner with an experienced developer.
- It is extremely difficult and costly to build more housing in SB. Over-regulation, a very long, expensive and risky entitlement process coupled with high land costs and low inventory lead to very few new buildings - and when they are built (think The Marc) renting there is expensive.
- Rent control is NOT the answer. It only serves to bring down the quality and quantity of housing options. As a city a lot could be done to help make housing more naturally affordable by cleaning up all the governmental and regulatory waste inherent in the process of developing and maintaining our housing stock.

Detty Peikert

Detty has a long history designing and helping build low income housing projects in the Central Coast area. As a partner in RRM Design Group, Detty has been the principal architect for numerous City and County Housing Authority projects. Additionally Detty and I server on Garden Court Inc. a housing nonprofit that has built three multi-unit housing projects in Santa Barbara that serve low income seniors.

The high cost of housing is the result of many factors. Notably NIMBYism, a no-growth attitude, size/bulk and scale constraints and a general resistance to change, have hindered addressing housing needs. Land costs, and construction costs are difficult to control. A pro-housing government and stronger community voice could do a lot to overcome the financial barriers to developing more supply.

Our community's greatest need is workforce housing. 35,000 people commute into Santa Barbara daily for work. Those people make a living here, but spend most of their disposable income in the home communities they go back to each day. Importing our workforce from other cities is costly in numerous ways.

As Detty and I have participated in many housing conversation at different levels of civic engagement several concepts continually flit in and out of the foreground:
1. Employer Housing - think Westmont faculty housing or Cottage Health employee housing. How can we as a community encourage more institutions (and small organizations like SBCC) to create housing for their employees?
2. Workforce Housing - Government subsidies favor "Low-income" housing. Housing for those that have little or no income. How can we better engage private "market rate" development purpose built for our workforce?
3. Density/Size/Bulk/Scale - how can we help our community prioritize housing needs over keeping things as they are/trying to live in the "good old days"? As a community we seem to have an endless amount of criticism for new development and endless complaining about high cost of housing. You have to give a little to get what you want.
4. Parking and Traffic - have been barriers to new housing. The communities of the future will have less need of personal parking spaces as the shared economy continues to grow - less people owning their own car will mitigate the growth of traffic congestion as alternative transportation and ride-sharing gain popularity. Downtown SB parking occupancies are down 10% as Uber/Lyft trips deliver over 33,000 people to and from downtown on a monthly basis. Parking is a large

consideration in development. Costly to build and takes up a significant amount of land.

<u>My summary comments</u>: Housing is considered by many to be the most significant challenge facing SB and the State of California. Governor Gavin Newsom (regardless of his other politics) has made it one of his highest priorities. Locally the lack of housing has both dramatic and subtle impacts. As a community we spend more on our housing expenses as a percentage of income than most if not all other comparable communities. What does this do to our quality of life, or our ability to care for one another? This community wide handicap makes it very difficult to retain young people, or promote a healthy socioeconomic diversity.

How can we help our church body to make wise housing choices? How can we help them mitigate the negative impact of the high cost to housing? How can we make a positive impact on housing community wide and, more close to home, our employees?

<u>Notes from Tim Wilson's meeting with Diane Martinez, Director of Immigrant Hope</u>

- The two-hour meeting was illuminating in so many ways. Diane's passion is to humbly follow the Lord's leading in using this ministry to care for the immigrant population in Santa Barbara while proclaiming the Gospel. Three people coming into the Immigration Center accepted Christ as savior this past month.
- Immigrant Hope is a nation-wide ministry with 7 centers and 4 who have applied with the Department of Justice to become recognized centers. Recently, Diane was invited to meet with a group of pastors in Phoenix to open a 12th center. The ministry is housed at Shoreline Community Church and is part of the Evangelical Free Church of America. It has a compelling overarching mission:
  - Equipping churches to provide immigrants with
    - The HOPE of the gospel,
    - HELP finding a pathway to legal residency, and a
    - HOME in a church that cares for their needs.
  - Vision
    - Churches known in their communities as places of welcome and safety.
    - Christians sacrificially loving neighbors and enemies alike, for the sake of the grace they have received.
    - Strangers embraced and cared-for as family, given wise and law-abiding counsel, and introduced to Jesus Christ and His salvation.
  - Values
    - Great Commission – Making disciples of all people
    - Great Commandment – Love of God fueling love of neighbors
    - Great Companion – Relying on the Holy Spirit
    - Great Community – Building up the local and universal church
    - Great Compassion – Caring for the poor and oppressed
- Immigrant Hope has three staff members that have taken coursework to earn the status of *partial accreditation* through the Department of Justice that allows them to counsel clients who are going through the process to become citizens. Full accreditation is needed to represent clients in court. Those seeking citizenship are able to enroll in a Civics Course that provides the content required to pass the citizenship test. There are also English, Computer, Community Education (El Puente) and a Driver's License study course to help in passing the driver's license test. (Along with Diane Martinez, Isabel Beveridge and Karla Lara are the three staff with *partial accreditation. Karla is working on her full accreditation with a goal of full accreditation by the year end)*
- Diane has presented programs related to immigration to many churches and would be honored to do a program with Q & A at Santa Barbara Community Church.
- Immigrant Hope could use assistance in the following ways:
  - Having a member of SBCC (woman, woman of color desired) on Board of Directors
  - Tutoring in the Civics Class (do not need to be bilingual) – Currently it is getting harder for people who have to do their citizenship interview in English. Tutoring to help them understand the questions on the application is also needed.

- o Volunteer to do Administrative work (e.g. class registrations using EXCEL)
- o English as second language teacher and tutoring
- o Grant writing
- o Fundraising
- o Establishing a civics and driver's education program in Goleta
- o Supporting financially (e.g. Christ Presbyterian has named *Immigrant Hope* as local mission to support). Shoreline Church has a fund called the "Good Samaritan Fund" that helps immigrant neighbors with basic needs.
- Diane provided a number of local agencies that are working together to serve the immigrant community:
  - o The Santa Barbara Alliance for Community Transformation (SB ACT) exists to equip the community to lovingly engage the marginalized while actively working for the betterment of their physical, spiritual, emotional, and mental needs.
  - o The immigrant population is one subset of the marginalized served by SB ACT (Administrative Manager, Landon Ranck; Director, Rich Sander).
    - ▪ Supports the *Food Pantry* which provides free food the 4th Tuesday each month from 4-6 pm at Harding School. Participants visits tables representing various agencies that serve the marginalized prior to getting their food. *Immigration Hope often* staffs one of the tables to share about their services. Dana VanderMey (dana@sbact.org) organizes the *Food Pantry* (Dana is married to Randy VanderMay, English Professor at Westmont).
  - o Santa Barbara Library host an adult literacy program and civics education
  - o Community Covenant Church Children's Pastor, Andrew Mark, is on Board of Immigrant Hope. Mark gained the trust of clients of Immigrant Hope and organically gathered interest among many unchurched to join him in a bible study at Immigrant Hope.
  - o Immigrant Hope partners with the Family Service Agency and the Family Resource Center's to reach out to families needing immigration services. It's important that advocacy agencies and ministries work together and support one another rather than being in a silo.
  - o Santa Barbara Inter-Faith Sanctuary Alliance (SB ACT Administrator Landon Ranck is involved). The ICE raids provided the genesis of this group to help protect immigrants.
    - ▪ Some immigrants have been admitted to the US as asylum seekers, but the process to have a ruling on their cases takes a long time. Sponsors are needed for housing and help in paying legal fees. If allowed into the US to apply then these individuals are able to apply work permits after 150 days.
  - o Asylum Seeker Project is having its first meeting next Tuesday, March 19. Diane will be attending.
  - o Driver's Listo is sponsored by Trinity Episcopal Church and basically has a list of available drivers who will assist immigrants with transportation needs (e.g. medical appointments, immigration court, Consulate appointments, etc).
  - o SB Immigration Legal Defense Center

- - Provides Ppo-bono attorneys to help clients who go to court for bond hearings. This allows the immigrant time to find an attorney who can help them with their immigration case
  - League of Women Voters has raised the concern over the upcoming census and there was a forum that Diane was a part of on March 20, 2019. Many of the immigrants do not trust our current administration and are afraid to participate in the census thinking their information will be used against them. The census data and population is used to determine each states proportion of federal money and the states money is then divided among counties by population. The Westside of Santa Barbara has one of the lowest participation rates in the country so Immigrant Hope is involved in working with the immigrant population to help them understand the need for participation.

- These foundations have supported immigration related initiatives in Santa Barbara:
  - Santa Barbara Foundation
  - Weingarten Foundation
  - Bower Foundation
  - Fund of Santa Barbara

- Trends seen by Diane:
  - Fewer immigrants are coming from Mexico with an increase from Guatemala and Honduras.
  - More students are overstaying their visas from many different countries.

<u>Jarrod Schwartz from Just Communities</u> – done by Heather Young

What are some of the biggest challenges facing immigrants in our Santa Barbara?

- National climate of fear
- Hostile environment for documented and undocumented – made to feel like criminals
- Experiencing PTSD- constantly feeling attacked, lots of uncertainty with life and future (some families have signed over custody of their children in case they are deported- children still live with parents)
- Undocumented students and dreamers don't know their status when it comes to higher education (even if child is a citizen fearful of filling out Financial aid and gov't finding out about their parents)
- Fear of reporting crimes for fear of being found out or thought to be undocumented

What do you wish our community understood about the immigrants in our community?

- The level of fear, anxiety and trauma people are feeling.

How could churches in our community better care for immigrants?

- Showing up and being advocates when available- speak out against injustice
- Provide scholarships for families and students for legal fees (for asylum, deportation lawyers, citizenship, and giving custody to others of their children)
- Learn as much as possible
- Welcome a stranger into our church to make connections for support.

Is there a question we should be asking or addressing that I haven't asked about immigration or immigrants in Santa Barbara?

- Are we asking the right questions- is our congregation being educated or encouraged to develop self education around the topic of policies affecting immigration.(are we maximizing our voice within our beliefs)
- Asking the right people- CAUSE, immigration center, dreamer programs in our community and local schools
- Have we talked with our youth about ways to not add further injury, to those who this is a serious part of their life, with comments. Can our youth be allies in their schools. We can send a group of students to Just Communities social justice camp for a week in the summer to learn how to be advocates for justice.

Law Enforcement - Adam Shull - 1 year on the SBPD
1. What types of crime are most prevalent in Santa Barbara? Are there any increases or decreases in crime? Drugs - increase with new laws. DUI's we have one of the highest rates of DUI's in the nation.
2. What are particular challenges you see in the community? Homelessness. Half of the people see it as a lifestyle and don't want to get help and others need and want help.
3. What are the root causes of some of these challenges or in this crime? Drugs.
4. What problem would you love to see solved within Santa Barbara? Homelessness.
5. As a church we want to see the best for our city, so how could we partner with you? High view of police chaplains and their important role in the lives of police officers. Partner with officers family. They are the ones who suffer from having a family member serving.
6. It is hard to be a police officer as there is nationwide tension? Yes
7. How can we support you?
8. Is there any other aspect of your life personally or that of law enforcement officers broadly you think would be helpful for us to know? There are great programs happening with youth in SB.
9. What is something you wish the broader community knew about either law enforcement or our city? Housing problem with homeless people camping in public places because we have a housing shortage.
10. Demographics of police officers? Mostly white, lots of young men in their 20s, many come from the military.

Law Enforcement - Shane Moore - 7 years SB County Sheriff

1. Santa Barbara like most places has a variety of crime, if I had to pick the most popular I would say theft related crimes. I would also say there has been an increase of these crimes due to the reduction of consequences for committing these crimes ie. drug related consequences have dropped severely so drug users are on the streets committing thefts to feed their drug habits.

2. Outreach with youth from an early age is something that we as a community need to focus on. Early intervention is hard with the small amounts of resources that are available but would be key in making a difference in our Community.

3. Root causes to a lot of crime in most cities is drug induced. If we found ways to help/prevent drug addiction it would benefit the community as a whole.

4. I don't know if I could name one problem I wanted solved.... but the homeless epidemic would be a great start.

5. Community outreach is always a great start. Boots on the ground are always needed! Resources and people to speak with are always great.

6. The nation wide tension you see is merely in the news and is a way for people to make money. The overwhelming majority support law enforcement and are always happy to see us. Makes doing my job really easy.

7. You can always support us indirectly with local outreach and connecting with the youth and people in need.

8. We are all people, just like any other profession. We make mistakes and we for the most part are all in this to make our country a safer and better place.

Law Enforcement - Kasi Corbett - 4th ever woman at the SBPD to become an sergeant. We only have 17 women on our force of 160ish officers.

1. What types of crime are most prevalent in our area? Are there any increases or decreases in crime? DUI, drugs, theft related to drugs
2. What are particular challenges you see in the community? Talked a lot about the good things. Fiesta isn't as bad as it used to be. People are generally supportive of officers in SB.
3. What are the root causes of some of these challenges or in this crime? Drugs
4. What problem would you love to see solved in our community? Homelessness
5. As a church we want to see the best for our city, so how could we partner with you? Prayer
6. It is hard to be a police officer as there is nationwide tension, how can we support you and/or what would you want us to know about you?

"It's the hardest job to do and the easiest job to lose. Everyday you go to work knowing anything could happen which is stressful and weighty and one mistake and you could lose it all. More officers commit suicide than die on the line of duty."

7. What is something you with the general community knew, either about your job or our community? That we live in a really incredible place and are really blessed. She talked about the places around our country where things are so much worse. Stress on family life and never seeing your spouse. But she loves her job!

Overall thoughts on ways our church could be involved in this area of our community:
I would love to see us continuing growing in our partnership with law enforcement. To see them as allies in our community. For pastors and elders to go on ride alongs and to spend time with these amazing men and women who are putting their lives on the line to protect our community and to keep us safe. These men and women are spending 80% of their time with the homeless in SB. They are loving and caring for those who the rest of our community has pushed away. After traumatic tragedies in our community I believe we could find ways to care for our first responders.

To address homelessness and drugs, one officer we spoke with said the main way to help is through housing. He taught us about something they call a "wet" house. This is a place where men and women coming off the streets can experience living in a room and sleeping in a bed while still doing drugs and drinking. This experience is a step in the right direction for them to realize that they want to get off the streets. Becoming sober would be the next step.

Mental Health

From Andrea Gurney

What trends in mental health do you see in our community?
>-Increase in numbers of those who are struggling with mental health issues - more panic attacks, anxiety
>-More people seeking medication - younger ages
>-Increase in severity of what people are struggling with

What are the biggest challenges and needs you see for those struggling with mental health issues and for those working in the mental health field?
For those struggling with mental health issues:
>-Both getting help and getting proper help is getting harder - professionals are more and more in demand, particularly for those who are first time therapy seeker. It is especially hard to get into a see psychiatrist.
>-To be understood by others, by those in their community, by their friends - struggling with mental health can be so isolating and lonely. Those who are surrounding these individuals don't always know how to enter in. Mostly a person just wants to hear that you will be there for them.

For those working in the mental health field:
>-They can't keep up with the amount of clients.

What are ways you've seen churches hurt or help those struggling with mental health?
Ways churches have helped:
>-We're acknowledging it, praying for it, naming it.
>-We've begun to have more awareness, we've held seminars, have begun conversations
>-Churches have begun to partner with therapists or have therapists on their staff

Ways churches have hurt:
>-Churches have been really dismissive, have disregarded that mental issues are real. Have tried to spiritualize the issue - "if you prayed harder or had a closer relationship with Jesus, these issues would go away". It's been very hurtful and damaging.
>-Churches don't refer to professionals when it becomes apparent that people need professional counseling

What are ways churches could better partner with those in the mental health field?
>-Everyone on staff has a referral list, not only with qualified therapists but with specifics on who treats what kind of issues
>-Partnering with local organizations
>-Financial help for therapy. For example, Christ Presbyterian pays for couples to go to therapy. Have a budget line item for this.

From Unknown

What trends in mental health do you see in our community?
-We are talking more about it, there is more awareness, slightly less stigma, more information.
-There are much more cases of anxiety and depression, especially in teenagers - some factors playing into that:
        -Non-stop constant social comparison
        -Way to avoid or escape uncomfortable situations
        -Lack of building tolerance around discomfort or not knowing
-Fun violence, school shootings have caused broader societal awareness of need for mental health services and it's been given priority

What are the biggest challenges and needs you see for those struggling with mental health issues and for those working in the mental health field?
-Those struggling: Stigma, shame/isolation (I'm the only one feeling this way), need someone to be an initiator, unwillingness or hesitation to ask bold questions because there is a false belief that if we bring up a topic like suicide, the person will become suicidal - incorrect thinking.

-Those working in the field - dealing with clients who are ashamed, lack of understanding in the church. Affordability - fewer are taking insurance.

What are ways you've seen churches hurt or help those struggling with mental health?
-Hurt:
        -Over spiritualize mental health issues
        -Belief that you only need therapy if you don't have friends.
        -Lack of normalization of mental health, not allowing for diversity (people feel like they don't belong)
        -Marginalizing people who don't fit the mold.

What are ways churches could better partner with those in the mental health field?
-Create more open spaces for kids who look differently
-Financial resources
-Facility - for education, conversations, events
-Resources we can offer in partnership with agencies
-Belief that this is something we all need to grow in, not just "them"
-Proponents of education
-Sponsor community education event
-Mental health is not something we outsource, it's all connected to the whole well being of a person

Truth That Transforms
We desire for God's glory to transform of all we do. We value faithful teaching of God's Word as authoritative and relevant to our daily lives. We confess a faith rooted in historical Christian belief. We desire to be receptive and obedient to the Holy Spirit who is alive and active in our midst. Because God is God, it's our joy and privilege to worship and praise him individually and communally through beautiful music, liturgy, and prayer—as well as in every part of daily life. We believe that as we engage with the truth that never changes, he can change everything for His glory.

A Multigenerational Community
We are convinced that the Christian life is not meant to be lived in isolation; true transformation into the image of Christ—the making of lifelong disciples—happens best in community with other disciples. We are committed to small group ministry in every area of church life for exploring Scripture and pursuing Jesus together. We believe in team leadership at every level. We love to have fun together and share life in ways that extend beyond church programs. We value people of every age and season of life and their full participation in the church family.

Every-Member Ministry
We believe that every follower of Jesus is gifted and empowered by his Spirit to serve him, both in the local church family and in the surrounding community and world. In every area of ministry we seek to encourage and equip every believer to discover and use their unique gifts.

Devoted to Prayer
We believe that God moves in response to prayer, and that prayer is foundational to a relationship with God. From our periodic Days of Extraordinary Prayer, to Wednesday morning prayer gatherings, to elders' and staff meetings, to the prayers on Sundays and in every small group gathering, it's our joy and desire to be people devoted to prayer in all we do.

Disciples that Deploy
We recognize that God is building his kingdom and has generously called imperfect people like us into that work. We believe that the news of God's redemption of the world through Jesus is good news to be shared! We desire to encourage and equip our members to share the gospel in everyday life. We plan and work to provide generous support of kingdom-building mission work, both nearby and abroad. We encourage and support innovative kingdom-building mission endeavors that arise from our own community. We love to cooperate with other local churches who share the same desire to see the kingdom of God advance in Santa Barbara and around the world.

1. The Bible, truth

a. The Bible is the inspired word of God

b. The Bible is the place where we search for truth

c. Our Expository teaching is central to who we are

d. We use the Bible as the foundation for our Home Groups

e. God's word is authoritative and relevant to our daily lives

f. We help people know and understand what the Bible teaches about God, humans and all of creation

g. Knowing truth

h. Truth that transforms

2. Small groups, Home groups, shared life

a. We believe that Life has been designed to be shared.

b. We are better together than anyone of us can be by being independent

c. We have a commitment to small group Bible study built around Scripture, sharing life and pursuing Christ

together

d. We are a "mutually-transformative" community

e. We are journeying toward greater faithfulness to Christ through transparency, confession and steadfastness in

relationships

f. We are a people who love each other in practical ways

g. Believers are built and strengthened in homegroups

h. We spend time together at retreats

i. Our children's and youth ministries are built around small groups

j. We are a multi-generational community

k. A multi-generational community

l. Small Group Bible studies (Home Groups)

m. Better together

n. Helping people discover God's love

o. Joy in being together

p. Communities that catalyze

3. Missions, evangelism, outreach

a. We value Missions, both home and foreign

b. We believe that every human being needs Jesus

c. We believe in both supporting missionaries and mission organizations and going ourselves

d. We have a willingness to support innovative kingdom-building mission endeavors both locally and

internationally

e. We join with other local churches to seek to serve God here in our local community

f. We are a church that shares the message of God's redemption of the world through Jesus Christ

Values Group reflections

g. We area people who share the gospel with the lost.
h. We make significant financial and relational investment in missions
i. Kingdom-building missions

4. Family, multi-generational
   a. Small Group Bible studies (Home Groups)
   b. Whole family of God (multi-generational)
   c. Love each other practically

5. Worship, music, praise
   a. Shaped by word, prayer and joyful worship
   b. Worship

6. We are a God-centered people
   a. We have receptivity to the Spirit's leading in our midst
b. We are a Spirit-empowered people
c. God moves in response to prayer
d. God's glory
e. Spirit's leading

7. Every-member, gifted by the Spirit
a. We believe in Every Member Ministry rather than elevating self
b. We try to help people understand their gifting and calling into everyday ministry
c. We encourage individuals to pursue avenues of ministry as the Spirit directs
d. We live with a kingdom-minded perspective
e. We are a church where all believers are encouraged to use their gifts to build up the body of Christ
f. Empowered for ministry by the Holy Spirit
g. Recognizing gifts/calling
h. Every-member ministry

8. Spiritual growth
a. We are a community of disciples
b. We believe God saves people and places them in a local church as an expression of the worldwide church
c. We believe God calls people to life-long discipleship to become more like Christ and live as he did in our
   everyday lives
d. Based on Acts 2:42-47 we believe the church should be a mutually-submissive, encouraging and missional kind
   of organization
e. We believe we should be shaped by the ministry of God's word, prayer and worship
f. We participate in God's work through prayer when we meet for corporate prayer, morning prayer teams and
   days of extraordinary prayer
g. Sharing love

Values Group reflections

h. Life-long discipleship
i. Discipleship that deploys

quad·ren·ni·um project

AMERICAN BELIEFS, PREFERENCES & PRACTICES

The Quadrennium Report

Prepared for:	ECO: A Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians
Study area:	Custom Geography
Date of Report:	1/24/2019
Quad Project Version:	2012

About the NEW Quadrennium Project Report

The Quadrennium Project Report provides a projection of likely religious beliefs, preferences and practices for a defined study area. It is based upon the Quadrennium Project national survey conducted by MissionInsite. While general religious data is available through various organizations, only MissionInsite can provide local geography projections that are current.

How to read the Quadrennium Report

The NEW Quadrennium Project report is divided into three sections, each providing a different approach to the data.

• The **StoryView** Report presents 10 indicators of your study area's likely religious beliefs, preferences and practices.

• The **ThemeView** Report provides projections for the study area across all of the variables in the Quadrennium Project survey It is organized into three theme areas, called Landscapes.

- The Beliefs Landscape
- Religious Affiliations and Preferences Landscape
- The Local Church Landscape

Within each Landscape one or more specific categories are presented. In each case, the study area data is compared to the national average.

• **GraphView** provides several graphs that reflect the more significant findings, most comparing the study area to the national average.

The Study Area

Map data ©2019 Google
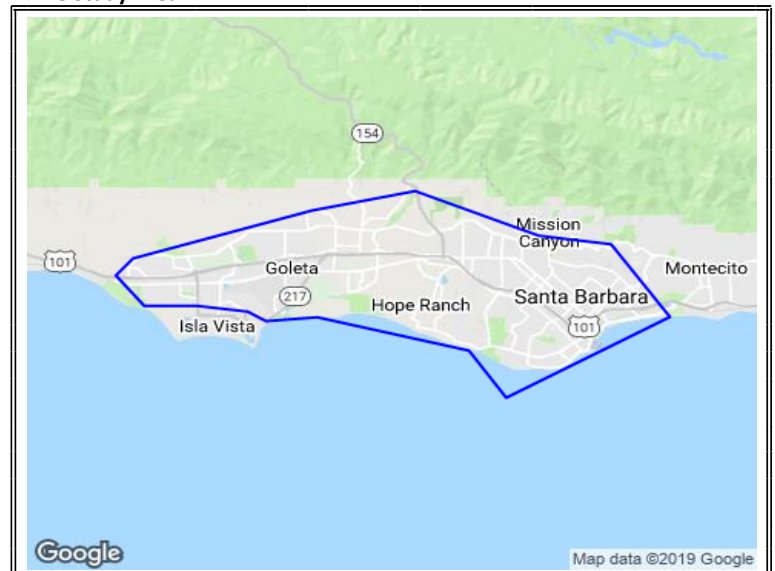
More Information

Please refer to the last page of the report for additional notes and interpretation aides in reading the report.

White Paper

A White Paper that provides specific information about how the Quadrennium Project was developed is available on the MissionInsite website. This document will present the concept behind the project, the survey that was fielded and how projections into specific geographic areas is accomplished.

Significant Indicators of Religious Beliefs, Preferences & Practices

1 — Beliefs about God

Compared to the national average, how traditional or non-traditional are beliefs about God?

(See the Beliefs Labout God Theme)

Very Traditional	Somewhat Traditional	Mixed	Somewhat Non-Traditional	Very Non-traditional
		Mixed		

2 — Beliefs about Jesus

Compared to the national average, how traditional or non-traditional are beliefs about Jesus?

(See the Beliefs about Jesus Theme)

Very Traditional	Somewhat Traditional	Mixed	Somewhat Non-Traditional	Very Non-traditional
			Somewhat Non-Traditional	

3 — Beliefs about Social and Moral Issues

Do the social and moral beliefs of this study area trend towards the conservative or progressive side of the political and social scale?

(See the Social and Moral Issues Theme)

Very Conservative	Somewhat Conservative	Mixed	Somewhat Progressive	Very Progressive
			Somewhat Progressive	

4 — Presence of "Nones"

Compared to the national average, what is the level of the religious preference "None, No Preference" in this study area?

(See the Religious Preferences Theme)

Very Low	Low	Average	High	Very High
			High	

5 — Change in Christian Religious Preference

In what direction has the Christian Religious Preference moved over the prior 10 year period?

(See the Religious Preferences Theme)

Significant Decline	Some Decline	About the Same	Some Increase	Significant Increase
		About the Same		

6 — Christian to Non-Christian Preferences

How does the aggregated Christian Preferences in this study area compare to the aggregated Non-Christian Preferences?

(See the Religious Preferences Theme)

Significantly Less Christian	Somewhat Less Christian	About the Same	Somewhat More Christian	Significantly More Christian
		About the Same		

7 — Significance of Faith to Life

Compared to the national average, how significant is" faith to life" in the study area?

(See the Faith and Religious Involvement Theme)

Very Low	Somewhat Low	About the Same	Somewhat More	Significantly More
	Somewhat Low			

8 — Change in Significance of Faith to Life

How much change, whether positive or negative in the signficance of "faith to life" is projected in this study area?

(See the Faith and Religious Involvement Theme)

No Change	Little Change	Modest Change	Significant Change	Radical Change
			Significant Change	

9 — Life Concerns

Overall, how do the concerns about life compare to the national average?

(See the Life Concerns Theme)

Very Low	Somewhat Low	About the Same	Somewhat More	Significantly More
		About the Same		

10 — Media Preference

What are the Media Preferences in the area?

(See the Media Preference Theme)

Very Traditional Oriented	More Traditional Oriented	Mixed	More Online Oriented	Very Online Oriented
	More Traditional Oriented			

ThemeView

Prepared for:	ECO: A Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians
Study Area:	Custom Geography
Quadrennium Report Region:	West
Date of Report:	1/24/2019
Quad Project Version:	2012

Beliefs Landscape

Beliefs about God

Beliefs about God held by people are very diverse. These statements express the likely views held by people within this area of study on a range of beliefs. Ideas range from well defined monotheism to loosely defined polytheism.

	Study Area		US Average		Comparative Index	
	Disagree	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree	Agree
Everyone and everything is god	44.6%	25.3%	43.9%	27.9%	102	91
God is a higher state of consciousness that people may achieve	35.1%	34.4%	33.5%	37.3%	105	92
God is love and invites the world into a loving relationship	15.4%	61.5%	10.2%	71.0%	150	87
God is the full realization of human potential	30.1%	36.5%	25.3%	42.3%	119	86
I believe God created the world but takes no further part in it	64.6%	9.7%	67.8%	9.7%	95	99
I believe in more than one god, i.e. many gods	68.5%	9.7%	75.0%	7.0%	91	138
I believe in Nature and/or spirits in Nature	25.2%	46.5%	26.5%	45.2%	95	103
I don't believe a god exists; the material universe is all that is	65.9%	16.4%	74.5%	10.9%	88	151
I have a personal relationship with one living God, who is Lord and Savior	29.2%	52.2%	19.4%	63.5%	150	82
I'm unsure/undecided about whether a god exists	63.1%	19.3%	70.5%	15.1%	89	128

Beliefs about Jesus

Jesus is a person of interest to many people, but what they think about who he was and what he did varies. These statements express the likely views held by people within this area of study.

	Study Area		US Average		Comparative Index	
	Disagree	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree	Agree
Jesus actually rose from the dead as the Bible teaches	21.2%	50.6%	14.6%	61.8%	145	82
Jesus belief does not require participation in a church	20.7%	55.8%	24.9%	53.7%	83	104
Jesus is both divine and human	18.9%	52.1%	14.4%	60.3%	131	86
Jesus is not like his followers in the Church	20.5%	35.2%	24.0%	35.0%	86	101
Jesus is the only way for human salvation from sin	34.0%	41.4%	24.0%	53.7%	141	77
Jesus rules now as Lord of Heaven and earth	25.9%	44.4%	19.5%	54.1%	133	82
Jesus was just a good moral teacher and no more	51.4%	21.6%	60.1%	16.3%	86	132
Jesus was the expected Jewish Messiah	16.8%	39.5%	13.2%	46.5%	127	85

Beliefs about Social & Moral Issues

A great deal of diversity of opinion of many social and moral issues exists. The table below presents the projected views that are likely to be dominate in the area of study.

	Study Area		US Average		Comparative Index	
	Disagree	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree	Agree
I believe...						
Abortion should remain legal	*21.0%*	**65.3%**	*27.1%*	*56.0%*	*78*	*117*
America has a moral responsibility to be a force for good in the world	*13.1%*	**70.0%**	*12.6%*	**70.2%**	*104*	*100*
Americans increasingly act irresponsibly to the detriment of the common good	*10.2%*	**70.5%**	*9.1%*	**70.4%**	*112*	*100*
Asking the rich to pay a higher tax rate is a way to establish justice	*26.8%*	*56.9%*	*25.4%*	*57.3%*	*106*	*99*
Children are adequately taught good moral standards today	***79.1%***	*10.0%*	***82.2%***	*8.4%*	*96*	*119*
Children ought to be raised in a two-parent, mother and father families, if possible	*23.9%*	*57.4%*	*18.8%*	**62.8%**	*127*	*91*
Marriage as a social institution is becoming obsolete	*35.6%*	*41.8%*	*31.8%*	*45.0%*	*112*	*93*
Marriage is only a relationship between one man and one woman	*45.1%*	*43.0%*	*35.5%*	*50.8%*	*127*	*85*
Our culture is too obsessed with celebrity	*2.9%*	**88.6%**	*3.3%*	**88.3%**	*89*	*100*
People should be involved in volunteer activities for the benefit of others	*4.1%*	**77.0%**	*4.5%*	**75.3%**	*91*	*102*
Religion must play a primary role in shaping individual morality	*33.7%*	*45.5%*	*23.3%*	*56.7%*	*144*	*80*
Religious communities should fully embrace LGBT persons (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender)	*23.0%*	*52.3%*	*27.3%*	*45.6%*	*84*	*115*
Same sex marriage should be legalized	*33.2%*	*52.0%*	*38.4%*	*42.3%*	*86*	*123*
If an aggressive act is committed against the US, we are justified in the use of violence in response	*14.4%*	**69.4%**	*13.2%*	**70.0%**	*110*	*99*
The government should be deeply involved in solving poverty	*22.0%*	**64.8%**	*22.2%*	**64.7%**	*99*	*100*
The government should not be able to interfere with the employment practices of religious organizations	*29.1%*	*44.5%*	*23.6%*	*48.8%*	*123*	*91*
The science that says humans are affecting the climate of the planet (i.e. global warming)	*20.8%*	**64.8%**	*20.6%*	*61.2%*	*101*	*106*
The US should pursue every avenue to stop illegal immigrants flowing into this country	*21.9%*	**62.0%**	*17.2%*	**66.6%**	*128*	*93*
Tolerance is necessary for social peace and well being	*8.4%*	**80.5%**	*10.4%*	**75.7%**	*81*	*106*
We must be good stewards of the environment even if it means restricting natural resource development. (such as drilling for oil, fracking, etc.)	*17.0%*	**67.2%**	*18.5%*	*61.2%*	*92*	*110*

Religious Affiliations and Preferences Landscape

Religious Preferences

Religious preferences range from the "Nones" to very specific traditions. The likely preferences within this area of study are presented below for both now and 10 years prior. Note any changes up or down.

	Study Area			US Average			Comparative Index	
	Now	10 Years Prior	Change	Now	10 Years Prior	Change	Now	10 Years Prior
Adventist/Anabaptist/Mennonite	0.7%	0.6%	0.1%	0.8%	0.9%	-0.1%	86	66
Baptist	5.4%	6.3%	-0.9%	12.5%	13.5%	-1.0%	43	47
Buddhism/Hindu/Sikh/Taoist	2.1%	1.9%	0.1%	1.3%	1.2%	0.1%	166	169
Catholic	16.0%	18.9%	-3.0%	20.1%	23.8%	-3.7%	80	80
Congregational	1.8%	2.1%	-0.3%	1.6%	1.8%	-0.2%	111	116
Episcopalian/Anglican	1.5%	1.7%	-0.2%	1.6%	1.9%	-0.2%	88	88
Holiness	0.1%	0.2%	-0.1%	0.8%	0.8%	-0.1%	12	25
Islam/Baha'i	0.3%	0.3%	-0.0%	0.5%	0.4%	0.0%	59	65
Jehovah's Witness	0.5%	0.8%	-0.3%	1.0%	1.1%	-0.1%	49	74
Judaism	4.7%	5.1%	-0.4%	3.4%	3.6%	-0.2%	137	140
Lutheran	4.2%	4.8%	-0.6%	4.7%	5.5%	-0.8%	89	86
Methodist	3.7%	4.6%	-0.8%	6.1%	7.0%	-0.9%	61	66
Mormon/Latter Day Saints	3.7%	4.1%	-0.4%	2.0%	2.0%	0.0%	185	207
Native American/New Age/Rastafarian/Wicca	1.3%	1.3%	0.0%	1.3%	1.3%	-0.0%	106	104
Non-denominational/Independent	7.3%	6.5%	0.8%	7.9%	6.1%	1.9%	92	107
None/No Religious Preference	29.2%	25.7%	3.5%	22.6%	19.6%	3.0%	129	131
Orthodox	0.5%	0.7%	-0.2%	0.7%	0.7%	0.0%	65	100
Pentecostal/Charismatic	2.9%	2.8%	0.0%	3.1%	3.1%	0.0%	93	93
Presbyterian/Reformed	3.7%	3.9%	-0.1%	2.8%	3.2%	-0.4%	134	123
Spiritual/No Religious Preference	10.0%	7.3%	2.7%	7.8%	5.2%	2.5%	129	139
Unitarian/Universalist	0.4%	0.5%	-0.1%	0.7%	0.6%	0.0%	65	77

Summary Religious Preferences: Christian and Other

	Study Area			US Average			Comparative Index	
	Now	10 Years Prior	Change	Now	10 Years Prior	Change	Now	10 Years Prior
Catholic & Orthodox	16.5%	19.6%	-3.2%	20.8%	24.5%	-3.7%	79	80
Historic Mainline Protestant Denominations	20.3%	23.3%	-2.9%	29.4%	32.8%	-3.5%	69	71
Other Protestant Denominations/Churches	10.9%	10.1%	0.8%	12.5%	10.8%	1.7%	87	94
Total: Christian Religious Preferences	*47.7%*	*53.0%*	*-5.3%*	*62.7%*	*68.1%*	*-5.4%*	*76*	*78*
Other Non-Christian Religious Preferences	12.8%	13.8%	-1.0%	9.65% / 9.8%		-0.1%	132	141
None/No Preference or Spiritual/No Preference	39.2%	33.0%	6.2%	30.34% / 24.8%		5.6%	129	133

Denominational Affiliations

Some people within an area of study will indicate an affiliation with one of the following denominations. These projected affiliations are presented below for both now and 10 years prior. Note any changes up or down.

	Study Area			US Average			Comparative Index	
	Now	10 Years Prior	Change	Now	10 Years Prior	Change	Now	10 Years Prior
African Methodist Episcopal Church	0.1%	0.1%	-0.0%	1.5%	1.3%	0.2%	6	9
African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church	0.2%	0.2%	0.0%	0.4%	0.5%	-0.1%	47	29
American Baptist Churches/ USA	4.2%	4.5%	-0.3%	9.1%	8.5%	0.6%	46	53
Assemblies of God	4.1%	3.9%	0.2%	4.3%	3.8%	0.5%	97	104
Christian and Missionary Alliance	1.3%	0.5%	0.8%	2.0%	1.6%	0.4%	68	33
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)	5.9%	4.6%	1.3%	5.3%	4.3%	1.0%	111	108
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints	11.1%	10.2%	0.9%	5.3%	4.2%	1.1%	207	241
Church of the Nazarene	0.8%	1.5%	-0.7%	1.7%	2.0%	-0.3%	50	76
Episcopal Church	2.8%	3.6%	-0.8%	3.2%	3.8%	-0.6%	88	95
Evangelical Free Church of America	1.1%	0.6%	0.5%	2.0%	1.5%	0.5%	55	43
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America	3.7%	4.3%	-0.6%	4.2%	4.2%	-0.0%	88	102
Foursquare Gospel	1.9%	2.0%	-0.1%	1.5%	1.7%	-0.2%	128	122
Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod	3.5%	3.5%	-0.0%	4.5%	4.8%	-0.2%	76	73
Presbyterian Church (USA)	5.1%	5.6%	-0.5%	4.0%	4.1%	-0.2%	129	135
Presbyterian Church in America	1.6%	1.4%	0.2%	1.7%	1.5%	0.2%	94	92
Reformed Church, RCA/CRC	1.3%	1.0%	0.3%	1.8%	1.6%	0.2%	70	60
Roman Catholic Church	37.2%	38.2%	-1.0%	39.2%	40.2%	-1.0%	95	95
Salvation Army	0.4%	0.4%	-0.1%	0.9%	1.0%	-0.2%	41	41
Seventh Day Adventist	2.0%	1.8%	0.2%	1.8%	1.9%	-0.1%	111	95
Southern Baptist Convention	3.1%	3.4%	-0.3%	9.1%	8.3%	0.9%	34	41
United Church of Christ	1.7%	1.3%	0.4%	3.1%	2.5%	0.6%	54	52
United Methodist Church	7.1%	7.5%	-0.3%	11.4%	11.7%	-0.3%	62	64

Faith and Religious Involvement

Faith is a dynamic factor in many peoples lives. For some it is growing and for others it is declining. The level of active involvement changes as well. The Faith and Religious Involvement variables look at this theme from several vantage points, providing an understanding of what is likely to be the case in the study area.

	Study Area	US Average	Comparative Index
Activity in a religious congregation or community:			
Projected percentage involved	30.9%	38.9%	79
Projected percentage NOT involved	**69.1%**	**61.0%**	113
Estimated change over prior 10 years	*-8.3%*	*-8.5%*	
Religious activity directional change:			
Percent likely to have become active	4.5%	6.9%	64
Percent likely to have ceased to be active	12.8%	15.3%	83
Percent Likely to have made no change	82.8%	77.8%	106
Net Change in direction of activity	*-8.3%*	*-8.4%*	
Projected significance of religious faith to life:			
Not Significant	29.3%	21.1%	139
Some Significance	33.0%	32.3%	102
Very Significant	37.7%	46.7%	81
Projected change in the role of religious faith over 10 years:			
No Significant Change	1.4%	0.8%	176
Some Significant Change	*-4.4%*	*-6.1%*	72
Very Significant Change	3.0%	5.3%	57
Probable level of participation for those involved in a religious congregation or religious community: Of those who indicated participation			
Holidays only	3.2%	3.9%	84
Less than once per month	6.1%	6.5%	93
Once per month	4.8%	7.2%	67
Two to three times per month	18.5%	18.2%	102
Weekly	**67.3%**	**65.6%**	103

Reasons for Non-Participation—Outside of the Church

People have different reasons for not participating in a religious congregation or community. These variables consider this from two perspectives; from the Outside and from the Inside. The Outside group are persons who most likely do not currently participate in any religious community. The Inside group reflects persons who most likely do currently participate but have considered discontinuing their involvement. In the national sample, those who were on the inside but considered non-participation was only 13% of the total who indicated activity in a religious congregation or community.

	Study Area	US Average	Comparative Index
From the Outside: Probable reasons for non-participation in a religious congregation or religious community: Percent Important			
About Personal Life			
Demands of raising children	25.1%	28.0%	90
Moved from community	23.7%	27.7%	86
No good faith community in area	26.4%	31.1%	85
No time/less time available	33.3%	38.3%	87
About Personal Faith			
Don't believe in God	37.4%	35.3%	106
No longer believe	34.0%	32.9%	103
Unsure about personal beliefs	37.5%	39.5%	95
Wasn't relevant to my life	55.3%	48.3%	114
About the Church			
Boring/uninteresting	45.6%	42.8%	107
Conflicts in religious community	45.5%	45.2%	101
Didn't feel welcome/useful	38.8%	41.4%	94
Disillusionment with religion	55.6%	52.6%	106
Don't trust organized religion	63.4%	58.5%	108
Don't trust religious leaders	66.0%	61.7%	107
Never been invited	17.5%	19.7%	89
Not current/old fashioned	34.6%	35.6%	97
Religion too focused on money	63.4%	65.8%	96
Religious people too judgmental	67.3%	65.9%	102
Strict/inflexible beliefs	57.5%	53.9%	107
Wasn't supportive during crisis	32.8%	34.7%	95
Worship/music style	32.3%	36.6%	88

Reasons to Consider Non-Participation—Inside of the Church

	Study Area	US Average	Comparative Index
From the Inside: Probable reasons for considering non-participation in a religious congregation or religious community: Percent Important			
(Of the 13% of the national sample who were currently participating but considered non-participation, the following are the reasons.)			
About Personal Life			
Demands of raising children	47.2%	41.2%	114
Moved from community	50.8%	53.7%	95
No good faith community in area	62.4%	58.2%	107
No time/less time available	59.9%	52.8%	113
About Personal Faith			
Don't believe in God	56.1%	49.6%	113
No longer believe	54.7%	50.9%	107
Unsure about personal beliefs	63.1%	59.8%	106
Wasn't relevant to my life	63.6%	55.9%	114
About the Church			
Boring/uninteresting	57.7%	56.6%	102
Conflicts in religious community	67.3%	69.1%	97
Didn't feel welcome/useful	62.8%	67.8%	93
Disillusionment with religion	69.0%	63.1%	109
Don't trust organized religion	57.2%	56.5%	101
Don't trust religious leaders	67.3%	71.8%	94
Never been invited	38.1%	34.7%	110
Not current/old fashioned	54.6%	50.2%	109
Religion too focused on money	61.0%	69.6%	88
Religious people too judgmental	63.6%	66.9%	95
Strict/inflexible beliefs	67.3%	66.5%	101
Wasn't supportive during crisis	61.4%	67.5%	91
Worship/music style	65.6%	64.4%	102

Life Concerns

People and their households have daily concerns with which they must deal. The lists in this table presented the projected concerns for the area of study.

		Study Area			US Average			Comparative Index	
		Modest Concern	Significant Concern		Modest Concern	Significant Concern		Modest Concern	Significant Concern
Personal Life	**Average**	**30.7%**	**8.7%**		**29.5%**	**9.7%**		**104**	**90**
Anger management/losing my temper		28.6%	5.0%		29.5%	5.4%		97	92
Depression		37.3%	8.8%		35.9%	10.4%		104	85
Finding a mate/spouse		15.7%	7.2%		15.2%	7.4%		104	96
Getting over the past/dealing with guilt		39.2%	7.3%		37.7%	7.8%		104	94
Losing weight/diet issues		50.6%	19.4%		48.4%	22.4%		105	87
Making friends		35.7%	6.1%		32.6%	6.4%		110	96
Personal health problems		54.5%	15.7%		52.3%	17.3%		104	91
Problems with addictions		13.0%	2.8%		11.9%	3.5%		108	82
Struggling with my sexual orientation		3.7%	1.0%		3.6%	1.7%		101	61
Unemployment/Losing my job		28.9%	14.0%		28.4%	14.5%		102	96
Home and Family	**Average**	**24.1%**	**6.7%**		**24.2%**	**7.8%**		**99**	**86**
Avoiding homelessness		23.0%	8.3%		23.1%	8.8%		100	94
Balancing work & family		31.9%	7.4%		33.1%	8.5%		96	87
Caring for aging parents		27.9%	13.5%		28.1%	13.5%		99	100
Child who is gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender		4.3%	2.3%		4.9%	2.6%		87	87
Conflict resolution/arguing too much		31.5%	4.3%		30.4%	6.7%		104	65
Divorce		10.0%	2.9%		9.9%	3.6%		100	80
Domestic violence in my family		6.3%	1.9%		7.1%	2.4%		89	79
Health crisis/illness		49.2%	13.8%		47.7%	15.8%		103	87
Marriage problems		16.9%	4.4%		17.4%	5.1%		97	86
Raising a teen		14.0%	4.8%		15.0%	6.8%		94	71
Raising children as a single parent		8.2%	2.8%		7.9%	4.4%		103	63
Stress/time to relax		48.0%	14.4%		48.6%	16.3%		99	89
Struggles with Adult Children		19.5%	4.8%		20.5%	5.4%		95	89
Time for friends/family		46.2%	8.1%		45.1%	9.2%		102	88
Community	**Average**	**27.2%**	**12.7%**		**26.1%**	**13.7%**		**104**	**93**
Illegal immigration		22.9%	19.2%		21.0%	19.4%		109	99
Violence in my neighborhood		31.6%	6.2%		31.2%	8.0%		101	78
Career and Financial	**Average**	**44.4%**	**21.9%**		**43.3%**	**23.9%**		**102**	**91**
Day-to-day financial matters		48.9%	23.2%		48.9%	26.1%		100	89
Financing the future/savings/ retirement		48.8%	33.0%		47.0%	35.0%		104	94
Reaching my goals/being successful		45.5%	15.9%		44.2%	17.6%		103	90
Satisfying job/career		34.3%	15.5%		33.2%	17.1%		103	91
Future Hopes and Possibilities	**Average**	**39.2%**	**11.8%**		**39.7%**	**13.0%**		**99**	**91**
Fear of the future or the unknown		48.7%	16.1%		49.0%	17.3%		99	93
Fulfilling marriage/romance & intimacy		35.3%	11.6%		34.4%	12.4%		103	93
Making the right choices/finding direction		49.8%	13.5%		49.7%	14.9%		100	90
Spiritual issues/religion		23.1%	6.1%		25.8%	7.4%		90	82

Sources: US Census Bureau, Synergos Technologies Inc., Experian, DecisionInsite/MissionInsite

Program or Ministry Preferences

Different communities need different programs and services. The table below presents the kinds of programs or services that are likely to be considered important in the area of study.

	Study Area		US Average		Comparative Index	
	Modestly Important	Very Important	Modestly Important	Very Important	Modestly Important	Very Important
Personal Growth	30.9%	6.8%	32.6%	9.2%	95	74
Addiction support groups	26.1%	7.4%	26.9%	10.0%	97	74
Health/weight loss programs	30.8%	6.7%	33.9%	9.1%	91	74
Practical training seminars	35.9%	6.2%	37.1%	8.5%	97	73
Family Support and Intervention Services	33.8%	10.1%	35.0%	14.8%	97	69
Daycare/After-School Programs	22.2%	7.0%	24.3%	10.6%	91	66
Crisis support groups	41.2%	10.7%	41.7%	14.3%	99	75
Family oriented activities	38.5%	17.3%	39.5%	24.0%	97	72
Marriage enrichment	34.1%	8.8%	35.3%	13.7%	97	64
Parenting development	27.8%	7.8%	29.6%	11.7%	94	67
Personal/family counseling	39.4%	9.0%	39.6%	14.2%	99	63
Community Involvement and Advocacy Programs	49.1%	13.2%	47.7%	16.1%	103	82
Adult social activities	52.8%	13.5%	51.8%	17.0%	102	79
Involvement in social causes	49.6%	12.6%	48.6%	15.5%	102	81
Social justice advocacy work	40.8%	9.8%	39.3%	11.6%	104	84
Opportunities for volunteering in the community	53.2%	16.8%	51.1%	20.4%	104	82
Community Activities or Cultural Programs	42.0%	13.2%	42.3%	16.6%	99	79
Cultural programs (music, drama, art)	45.3%	11.2%	45.2%	12.8%	100	88
Holiday programs/activities	48.3%	14.3%	49.0%	18.0%	99	79
Seniors/retiree activities	43.4%	13.1%	41.8%	16.7%	104	79
Youth social activities	30.9%	14.1%	33.0%	18.8%	93	75
Religious/Spiritual Programs	32.4%	14.1%	34.2%	19.0%	95	74
Alternative spiritual practices (meditation, yoga, etc.)	29.6%	8.4%	28.2%	8.0%	105	105
Bible or Scripture study/prayer groups	30.3%	14.8%	32.5%	21.6%	93	68
Christian education for children	24.4%	14.7%	27.8%	22.0%	88	67
Contemporary worship services	37.7%	12.4%	40.2%	17.0%	94	73
Spiritual discussion groups	37.8%	10.8%	40.1%	15.0%	94	72
Traditional worship services	34.9%	23.6%	36.8%	30.3%	95	78

Media Preferences

How do people get information about the world? How do they communicate with the world? In our ever changing world of media and communications, no single channel is dominate. The table below presents the media preferences that are likely to be important in the area of study.

	Study Area		US Average		Comparative Index	
	Modestly Important	Very Important	Modestly Important	Very Important	Modestly Important	Very Important
Blogs	15.2%	7.4%	14.8%	5.2%	102	143
Email letters	29.4%	34.6%	29.3%	32.4%	100	107
Facebook	20.8%	32.6%	20.9%	36.8%	100	88
Linked in	10.2%	3.2%	9.8%	2.4%	103	134
Local TV News	28.0%	52.5%	26.9%	56.0%	104	94
National TV News	30.3%	44.8%	31.1%	44.8%	97	100
Online News (e.g. CNN/ABC)	31.5%	33.0%	31.3%	31.8%	101	104
Print Media	33.5%	31.6%	35.9%	26.9%	93	117
Public TV/Radio	27.2%	26.0%	27.8%	26.7%	98	97
Radio	34.2%	36.0%	34.6%	35.9%	99	100
Twitter	6.7%	5.4%	7.1%	4.6%	95	117
Other	17.1%	9.4%	15.1%	8.3%	113	113

GraphView

Prepared for: ECO: A Covenant Order of Eva
Study Area: Custom Geography
Quadrennium Report Region: West
Date of Report: 1/24/2019

Beliefs

Beliefs About God: Agree with Statement
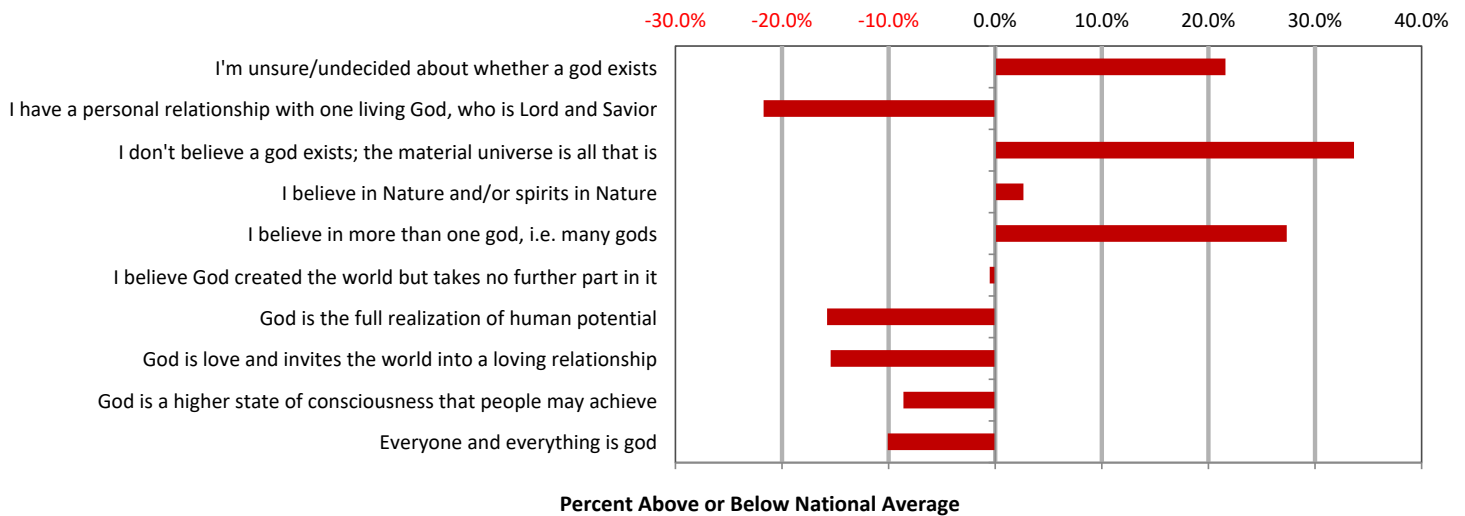
Percent Above or Below National Average

NOTE: Vertical line is the average of all comparisons, indicating the general "leaning" of the study area compared to the US.
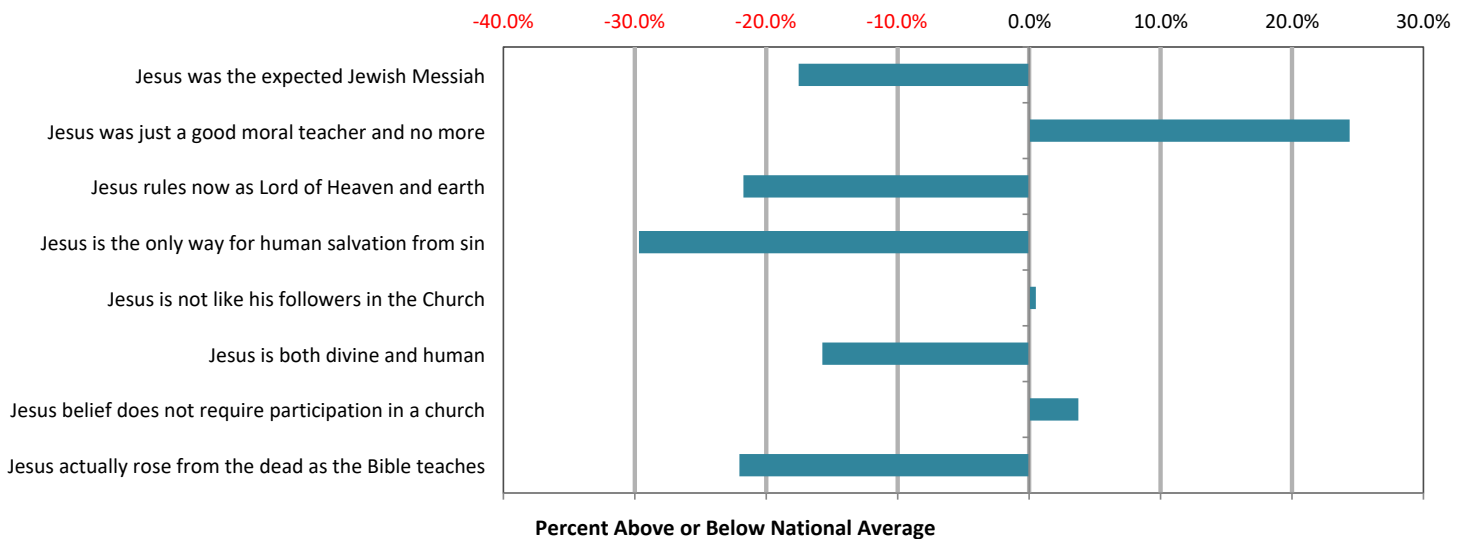
Beliefs About Jesus: Agree with Statement
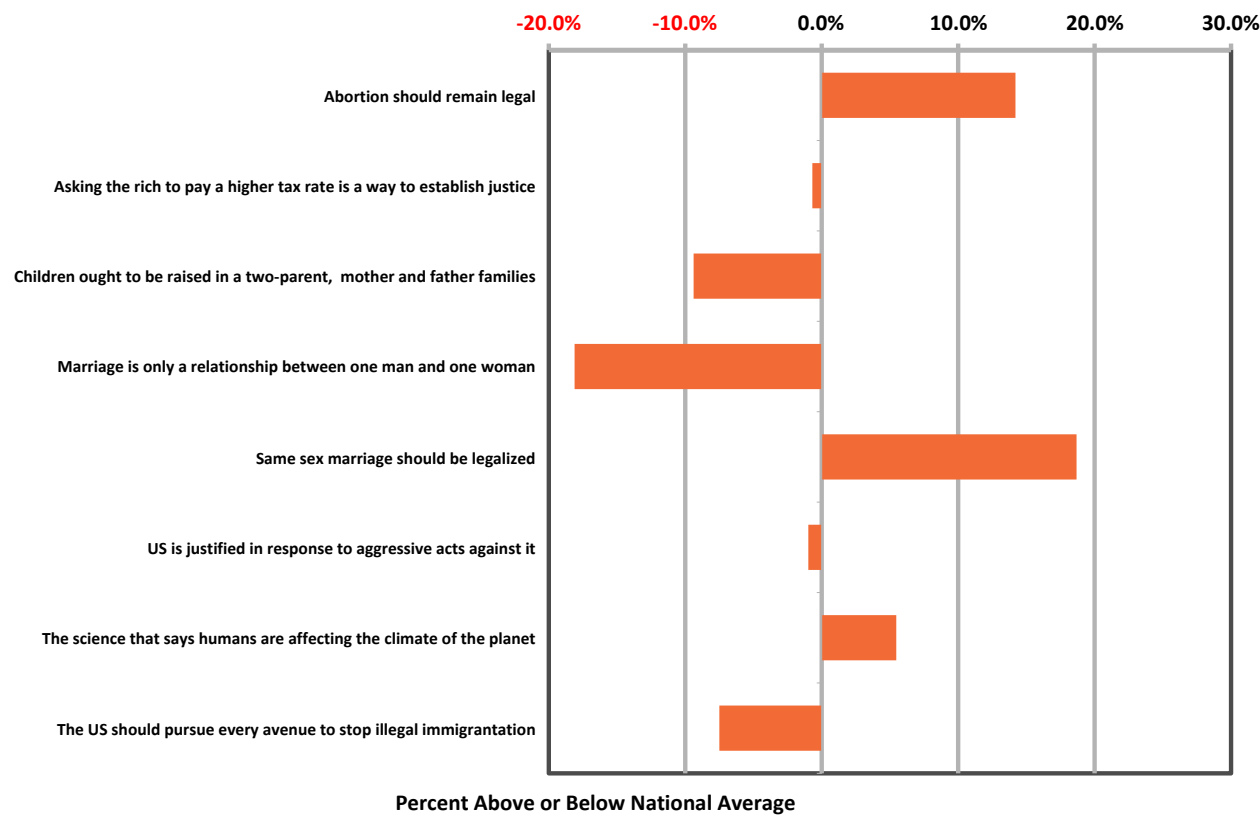

Percent Above or Below National Average

NOTE: Vertical line is the average of all comparisons, indicating the general "leaning" of the study area compared to the US.

Beliefs About Social and Moral Issues: Major Social Issues

Horizontal bar chart with axis from -20.0% to 30.0% (in 10.0% increments), labeled "Percent Above or Below National Average".

Issue	Approximate value
Abortion should remain legal	+14%
Asking the rich to pay a higher tax rate is a way to establish justice	+1%
Children ought to be raised in a two-parent, mother and father families	-7%
Marriage is only a relationship between one man and one woman	-15%
Same sex marriage should be legalized	+20%
US is justified in response to aggressive acts against it	+1%
The science that says humans are affecting the climate of the planet	+5%
The US should pursue every avenue to stop illegal immigrantation	-6%

NOTE: Vertical line is the average of all comparisons, indicating the general "leaning" of the study area compared to the US.

Religious Involvements

No Religious Preference

Estimated Percentage of the Population

Category	Percentage
Spiritual/No Preference	22.3%
None	22.6%

(Axis labels: 22.2%, 22.3%, 22.3%, 22.4%, 22.4%, 22.5%, 22.5%, 22.6%, 22.6%, 22.6%)

Involvement in Religious Congregation or Community

Category	Percentage
Not Involved	69.1%
Involved	30.9%

(Axis labels: 0.0%, 10.0%, 20.0%, 30.0%, 40.0%, 50.0%, 60.0%, 70.0%, 80.0%)

Estimated Change in Religious Preferences Over 10 Years

(Axis labels: -4.0%, -2.0%, 0.0%, 2.0%, 4.0%, 6.0%, 8.0%)

Category	Percent Above or Below National Average
Catholic & Orthodox	-3.2%
Historic Mainline Protestant Denominations	-2.9%
Other Protestant Denominations/Churches	0.8%
Other Non-Christian Religious Preferences	-1.0%
None/No Preference or Spiritual/No Preference	6.2%

Percent Above or Below National Average

NOTE: Vertical line is the average of all comparisons, indicating the general "leaning" of the study area compared to the US.
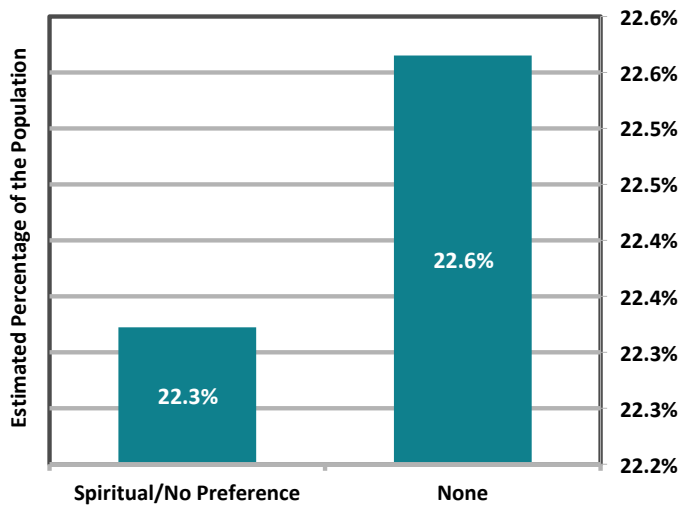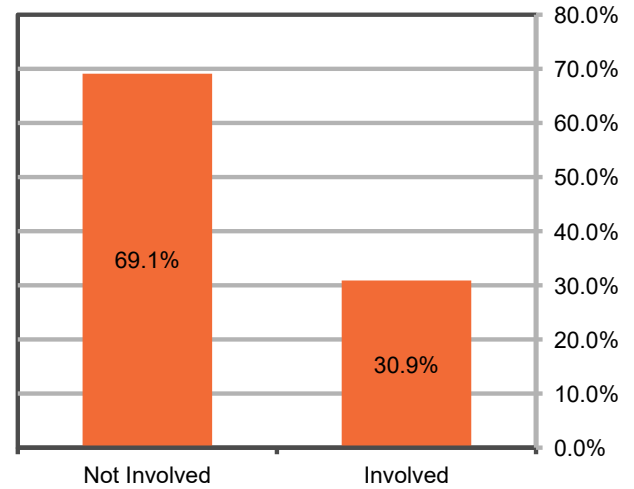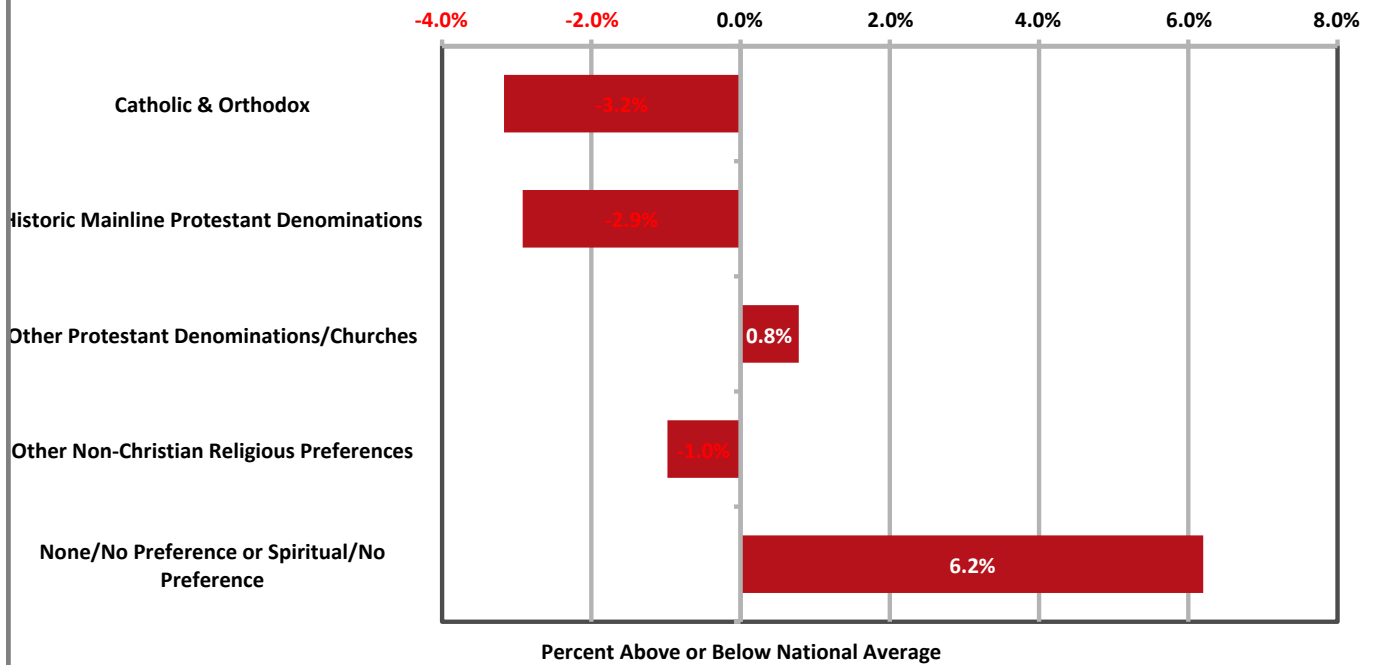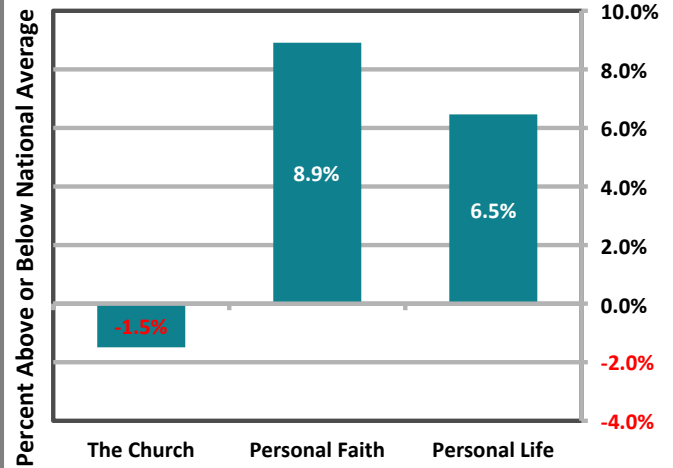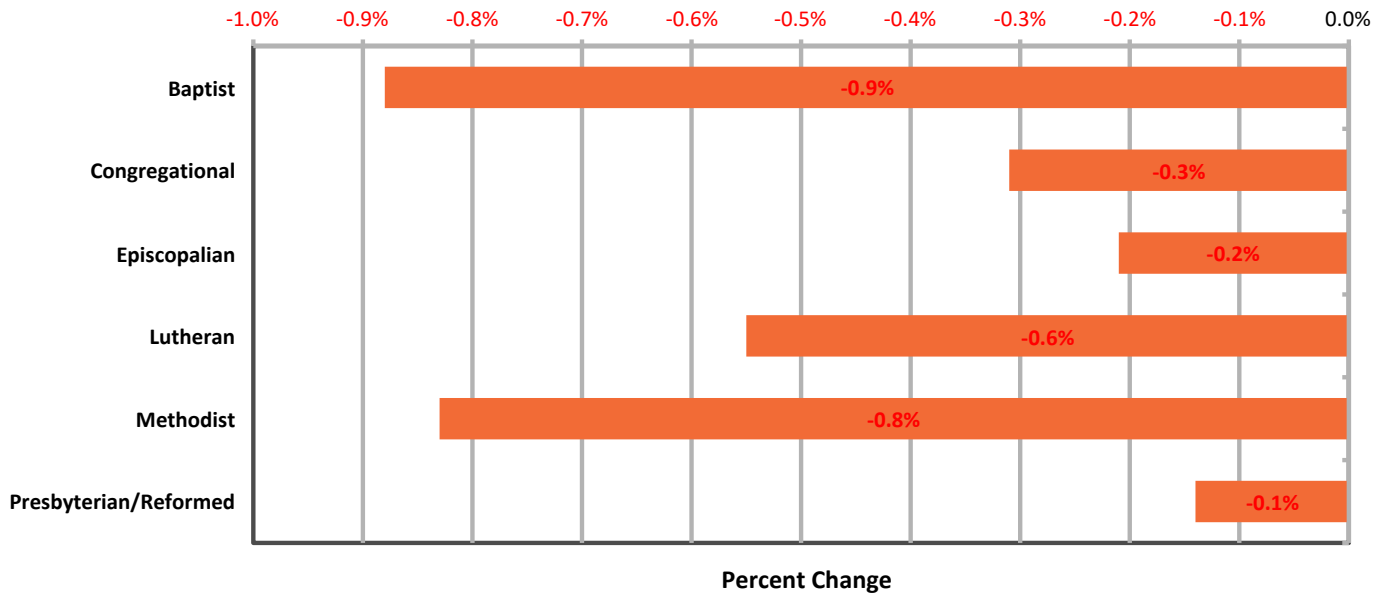
Reasons for Non-Participation: From Outside

Percent Above or Below National Average

- The Church
- Personal Faith: 5.0%
- Personal Life: -15.4%

(Scale: 10.0%, 5.0%, 0.0%, -5.0%, -10.0%, -15.0%, -20.0%)
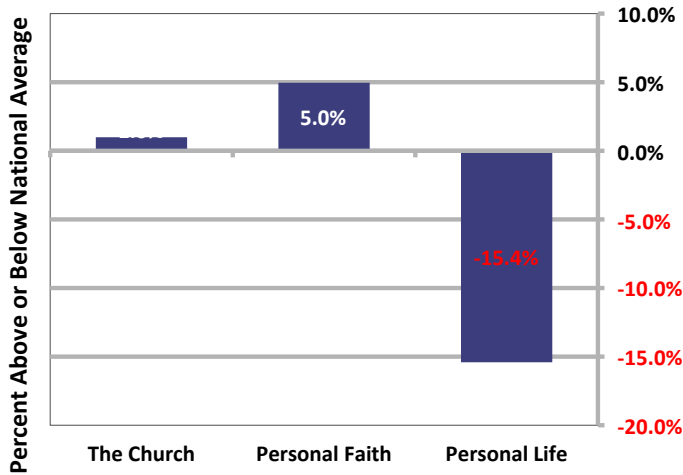
Reasons for Considering Non-Participation: From Inside

Percent Above or Below National Average

- The Church: -1.5%
- Personal Faith: 8.9%
- Personal Life: 6.5%

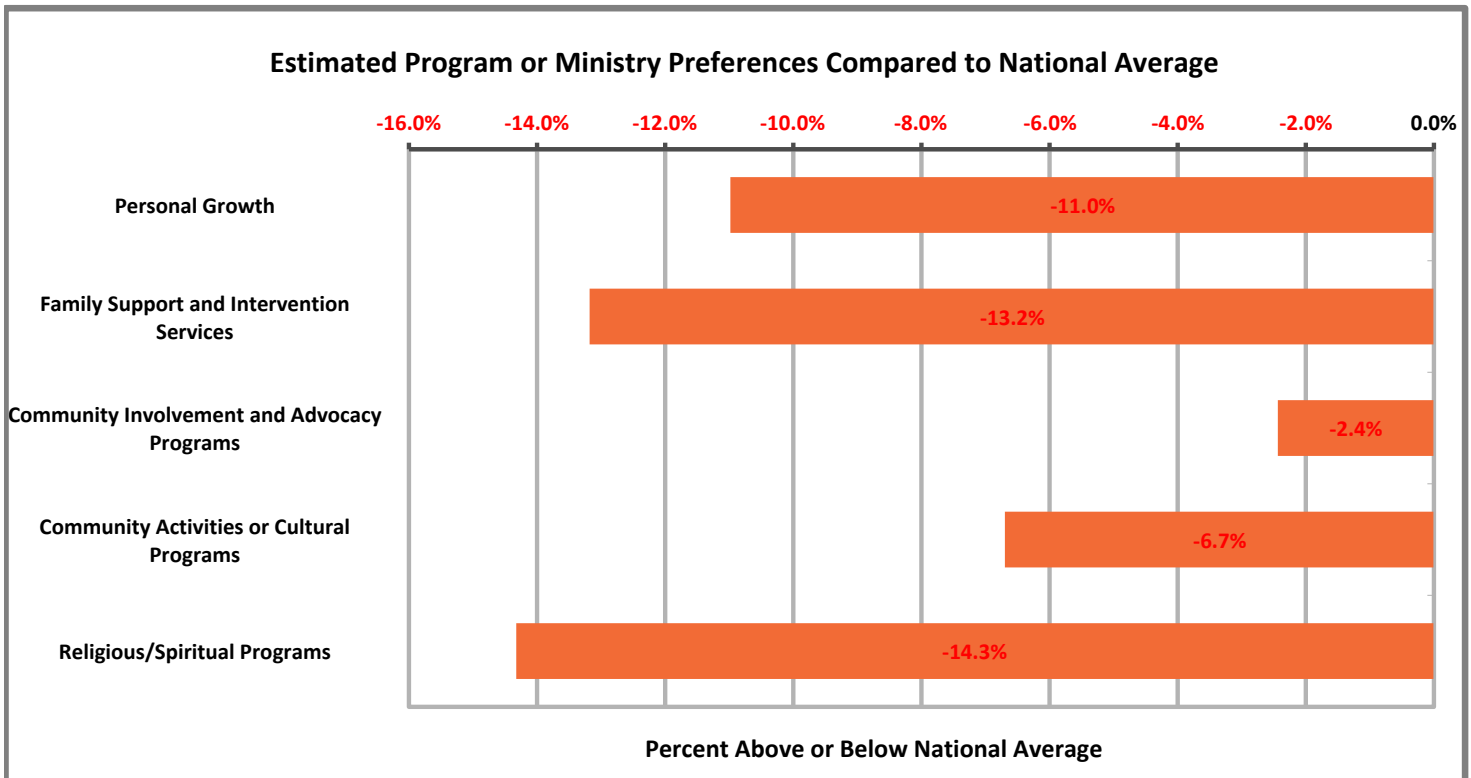(Scale: 10.0%, 8.0%, 6.0%, 4.0%, 2.0%, 0.0%, -2.0%, -4.0%)

NOTE: Horizontal line is the average of all comparisons, indicating the general "leaning" of the study area compared to the US.

Change in Historic Mainline Protestant Denominational Affiliation Over 10 Years

(Scale: -1.0%, -0.9%, -0.8%, -0.7%, -0.6%, -0.5%, -0.4%, -0.3%, -0.2%, -0.1%, 0.0%)

- Baptist: -0.9%
- Congregational: -0.3%
- Episcopalian: -0.2%
- Lutheran: -0.6%
- Methodist: -0.8%
- Presbyterian/Reformed: -0.1%

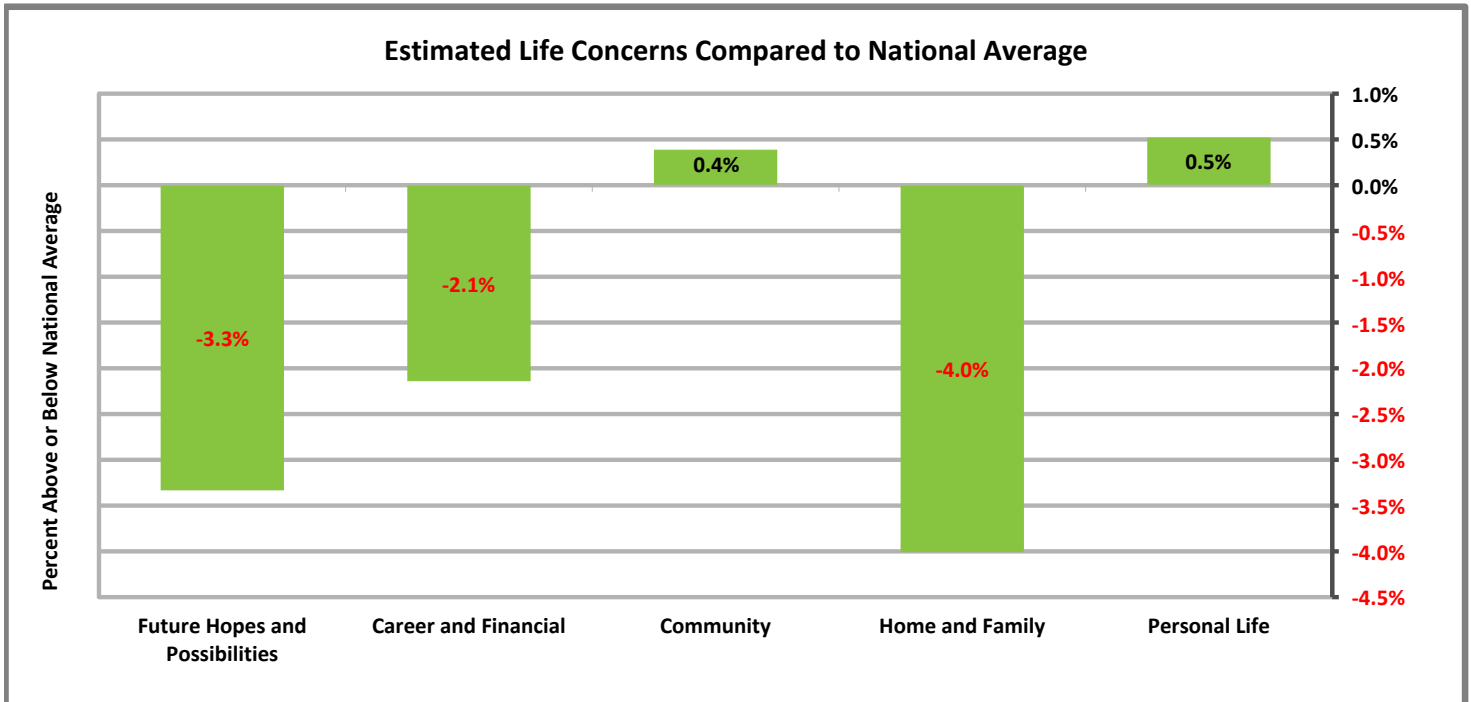**Percent Change**

Estimated Life Concerns Compared to National Average

NOTE: Horizontal line is the average of all comparisons, indicating the general "leaning" of the study area compared to the US.

Estimated Program or Ministry Preferences Compared to National Average

NOTE: Vertical line is the average of all comparisons, indicating the general "leaning" of the study area compared to the US.

Estimated Media and Information Source Preferences

Media	Percentage
Blogs	22.6%
Email letters	64.0%
Facebook	53.4%
Linked in	13.4%
Local TV News	80.5%
National TV News	75.1%
Online News (e.g. CNN/ABC)	64.5%
Print Media	65.1%
Public TV/Radio	53.1%
Radio	70.2%
Twitter	12.1%
Other	26.4%
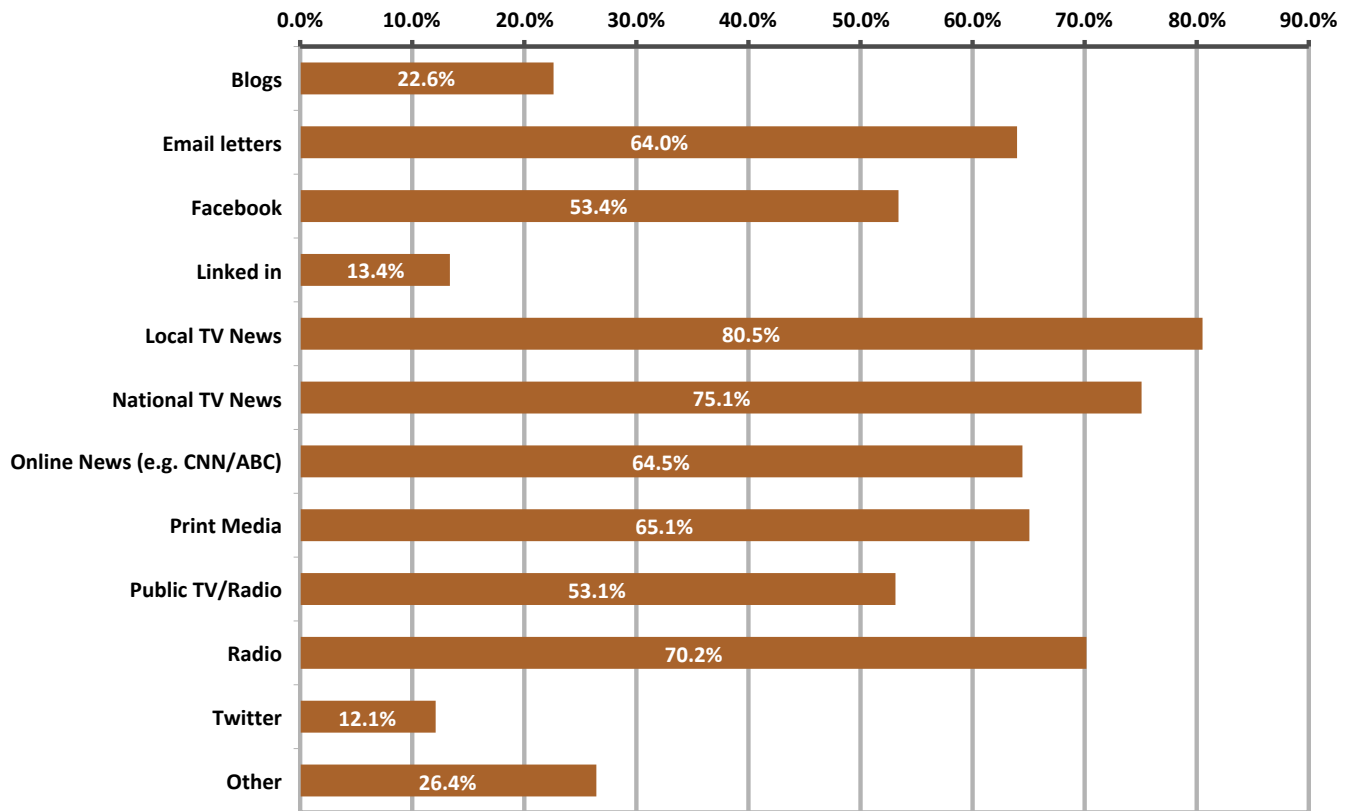
Interpreting the Report

The Quadrennium Project reports are formatted to help you interpret data at a glance.

Comparative Indexes: All variables will have a column called "Comparative Index." An index is an easy way to compare a study area with a larger area. For this report, all comparisons are with the national averages for the data item. The indexes can be interpreted as follows.

• Indexes of 100 mean the study area variable is the same as its base area.

• Indexes greater than 100 mean the study area variable is above the base area. The higher the number, the greater it is above the base.

• Indexes less than 100 mean the study area variable is below the base area. The lower the number, the greater it is below the base.

Note on StoryView

Report presents 10 indicators of your study area's likely religious beliefs, preferences and practices. This view has been revised to reflect how the selected area overview is measured

Color Coding: The "Comparative Indexes" columns are color coded to easily spot any change and the direction of that change.

Index: Above Ave   Ave   Below Ave.

Variable Definitions

Full variable definitions can be found in the Demographic Reference Guide. Download it free from the MissionInsite website resource page.

Support

If you need support with this report, please email MissionInsite at misupport@missioninsite.com.

APPENDIX D:

VISION FRAME

SBCC VISION FRAME

AIM:
Minds shaped by the Word of God
Hearts shaped by the character of God
Reationships shaped by the kingdom of God
Priorities shaped by the mission of God

AMBITION:
Inviting young and old to the truly good life in Jesus and the family of God.

ATMOSPHERE:
Joyfully Faithful
Relentlessly Relational
Collectively Invested
Generously Engaged

APPROACH:
Pause and pursue
Come and worship
Join a group
Go and serve

BEYOND THE HORIZON:

Though Santa Barbara enjoys a reputation as an idyllic destination, there is much in our city and surrounding community that reveals the emptiness of the claims of paradise. For over four decades, Santa Barbara Community Church has invited people to discover the truly good life in Jesus and a place in the family of God. Situated in one of the most post-Christian regions in the country, SBCC looks forward to a future in which a continued focus on growing deep disciples also leads to deep change in our surrounding community. We are committed to seeing our city transformed for Christ both through individual lives surrendered to Jesus and through bringing the blessings of the kingdom to bear on our community.

Pursuit of this vision of bringing the whole gospel to the whole city will yield fresh approaches to equipping SBCC members in gospel fluency; to fostering small groups marked by common pursuit of becoming and living more like Jesus; to training and raising up leaders; and to encouraging neighboring well in the places where we already live, work, and play.

By the year 2030, as we live into this vision by the power of the Spirit, we believe we will see noticeable change in individual lives and our broader community. We look forward to celebrating the miracle of hundreds of changed lives demonstrated in baptism. We envision increased engagement in ministry to the least, lost, and last of our community. We dream of launching several new pastors, church planters, and missionaries from our body to bring the good news of the gospel to the ends of the Earth. We long to see every member unleashed to use their gifts both within and outside of the church family. As this vision comes to pass, we eagerly anticipate seeing our city transformed from one of the least-churched in America to a place where people discover the surprising and truly good life of living for God's kingdom and the joy of belonging to his family.

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SBCC VISION FRAME

AIM:

Minds shaped by the Word of God
Hearts shaped by the character of God
Reationships shaped by the kingdom of God
Priorities shaped by the mission of God

AMBITION:

Inviting young and old to the truly good life in Jesus and the family of God.

ATMOSPHERE:

Joyfully Faithful
Relentlessly Relational
Collectively Invested
Generously Engaged

APPROACH:

Pause and pursue
Come and worship
Join a group
Go and serve

5-7 YEARS	• Noticeable emphasis on thinking Christianly in all spheres of life • Reinvigorated every member ministry through enhanced gift discovery and deployment • Articulated vision for everyday ambassadors
3-5 YEARS	
1-3 YEARS	• Development of specific gospel-fluency training/experience • Creation of intentional leadership development pathways • Intentional emphasis on missional aspects of faith, disciples who make disciples
1YR QUARTERLY	

APPENDIX E:

VISION FRAME SUPPORT MATERIALS

SBCC VISION FRAME MINISTRY INVENTORY

Ministry initiative/program	1-3 year goal

Step 1:
Revisit the list of church-wide goals in the "1-3 year" section of the Vision Frame.

Step 2:
Make a comprehensive list of the initiatives/programs for your ministry area.

Step 3:
For each initiative/program, indicate which goal from the "1-3 year" goal section is being addressed. Keep in mind that some of the 1-3 year goals may be addressed by means other than programs (e.g. leader trainings). Feel free to add in anything that fits that description.

Step 4:
In the space below, do a brief big-picture analysis of your ministry area, using the 1-3 year goals as a frame. Which of the church-wide goals is an opportunity for your ministry area to "stay the course?" Which of the church-wide goals is a gap requiring some fresh approaches or initiatives? Are there any redundancies or ministry initiatives that are not connected to any church-wide goal?

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BECAUSE OF AN ENCOUNTER WITH THE LIVING GOD, MATURING DISCIPLES DEMONSTRATE:

Minds shaped by the Word of God

Maturing disciples increasingly understand the person of God, the glory of God, and humankind's need for grace as a result of dedicated time spent in the Scriptures.

Q: How has your time in the Scriptures led you to delight in God, repent of sin, relish forgiveness, or give thanks for grace?

Q: What questions have you grappled with as you seek to understand and be shaped by God's Word?

Hearts shaped by the character of God

Maturing disciples increasingly evidence character consistent with the life of Jesus.

Q: What practices are helping you align your heart with God's heart?

Q: Where are the places that God is calling you to grow in conformity with Jesus?

Relationships shaped by the kingdom of God

Maturing disciples have relationships–both within and outside of the church–that increasingly evidence commitment to God's kingdom and its principles and characteristics.

Q: How have friendships within the family of God helped you sharpen one another into the image of Christ?

Q: How have your prayers, speech, and interactions with those who don't yet know Jesus pointed to the grace of God?

Priorities shaped by the mission of God

Maturing disciples increasingly orient their daily lives around the spread of God's glory both near and far.

Q: How have your time, abilities, and finances been used for the sake of Jesus' renown?

Q: How have your decisions reflected the priorities of God's redemptive mission in the world?

Homegroup Study Template

- <u>First few questions: Observation (MIND)</u>. These help us get into the text. What is there? What is not there? What do I notice? What are the main messages? What is the context? Who is being addressed? What is the tone? Where are there shifts, transitions or key words?

- <u>Middle questions: Meaning and Interpretation (HEART and RELATIONSHIPS)</u>. What does this text mean? What does it say about God, about the world, about me? Where can other parts of Scripture shed light on what's here and help us understand it? How does this text speak to God's heart for us? How does it address the state of our hearts toward God? How does it reveal sin and point me toward repentance? How does it reach my heart and life? How might this text lead us to consider the state of our relationship to community: the church family, our own families, friends, homegroup, etc.? How am I invited to grow in love for others?

- <u>Final questions: Response (PRIORITIES)</u>. Is there something God might be inviting me into? To do more of, or to do less of, or to stop doing? Is there something I need to pray about? Is there one concrete action I might take today or this week? How does this text address my relationship with the world? How does it call me to share the gospel? How am I being invited to serve/give/act for the kingdom of God in my spheres of influence? Am I being invited to reframe my priorities and values? Consider including at least one question here that deepens group life--encouraging or exhorting each other, sharing, confessing, holding accountable.

SANTA BARBARA

COMMUNITY
CHURCH

PASTOR OF LOCAL AND
GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT

1002 Cieneguitas Rd • Santa Barbara, CA 93110
karen@sbcommunity.org • 805-687-7797

POSITION DESCRIPTION

The Pastor of Local and Global Engagement furthers the vision of the Elders and Lead Pastors of Santa Barbara Community Church by maintaining, designing, and implementing initiatives that pertain to SBCC's global and local outreach efforts. This will include, but is not limited to: stewarding existing relationships with SBCC's supported missionaries; exploring new local and global partnerships to further SBCC's vision; leading and equipping SBCC's Missions Committee; overseeing financial strategy in a manner consistent with SBCC's vision; educating the SBCC family on evangelism and cultural engagement; and empowering and equipping the broader church body for gospel-fluent encounters with the local community.

QUALIFICATIONS

The ideal candidate will exhibit:
- Commitment to Christ as Savior and a life of worship and faithfulness
- Agreement with SBCC vision and statement of faith
- Ability to articulate Biblical truth as well as key doctrinal and theological points
- Willingness to co-labor with other members of SBCC staff in a spirit of joy, humility, and curiosity for the advancement of SBCC vision
- Strong organization, planning, and communication skills
- Relevant prior educational or professional experience
- BA or BS degree required; MA preferred
- Previous missions and/or church leadership experience desired

RESPONSIBILITIES

Key Responsibilities:
- In conjunction with Lead Pastors, develop vision for missions and local outreach as outworking of SBCC's vision
- Implement SBCC's vision for missions and outreach
- Serve as chair of SBCC's Missions Committee and empower MC members to serve as ambassadors of vision for missions and local outreach
- Alongside Missions Committee, serve as primary liaison between SBCC and supported missionaries
- Serve as champion for missions and primary voice for missions within SBCC
- Collaborate with Missions Committee to develop recommended SBCC missions budget in accordance with vision for missions and local outreach and submit proposed budget to Elders for final approval as part of annual SBCC budget
- Monitor annual spending of missions budget to ensure equity and distribution of funds consistent with SBCC vision
- Regularly meet with local missions partners in order to strengthen relationship, assess partnership, and encourage
- Connect with global missions partners in order to strengthen relationship, assess partnership, and encourage
- Provide vision, planning, and logistical support for SBCC short-term teams seeking to partner with SBCC-supported missionaries and partners

- Create and/or implement educational opportunities for SBCC members on topics of mission, evangelism, and gospel engagement
- Design and/or implement service-learning opportunities for SBCC members to engage with vision for missions and local outreach
- Partner with SBCC members to create and oversee local gospel-engagement initiatives
- Partner alongside other SBCC staff to incorporate vision for missions and local outreach into various ministry areas

Additional Pastoral Responsibilities:
- Participate as a member of the SBCC Leadership Team, as well as SBCC staff
- Contribute to overall task of pastoring SBCC family

Accountable to: Lead Pastors

SALARY

Salary: Range depending on education and experience

FOR MORE INFORMATION

If interested in applying please submit resume and cover letter to Karen McLean, Executive Pastor, karen@sbcommunity.org.

APPENDIX F:

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

A17 GROUP SYLLABUS

<u>OVERVIEW</u>:
This 5-week small group experience will explore cultural understanding, evangelism and missional engagement at a local level. Participants will be challenged to grow in their cultural fluency, heart for evangelism, and ability to articulate the hope of the gospel in contextually-appropriate ways.

<u>FORMAT</u>:
Groups of 8-12 participants will gather weekly for a 90-minute session that includes large group teaching, small group interaction, accountability to personal goals, mutual encouragement, and prayer. Over the span of the course, participants will read one book on evangelism, cultural fluency, or missional engagement and report back to the group, allowing their individualized learning to benefit and shape the entire group's experience. Additionally, participants will be expected to complete weekly assignments outside of the small group meetings. These assignments will further participants' learning and provide practical avenues for implementation of concepts discussed and learned in the group setting.

<u>COURSE FLOW</u>:
Week 1: Introductions, theological foundations
Week 2: What is our context? (Demographic studies)
Week 3: What is the gospel? (Articulating a contextualized gospel)
Week 4: Where is our courage? (Trusting the God we serve)
Week 5: What is our response? (Missional engagement)

<u>REQUIRED READING</u>:
Each group participant will be required to read one of the following books on relevant topics and to report back on their reading to the group.

Chester, Tim and Steve Timms; *Everyday Church*
Choung, James; *True Story.*
Jones, Peyton; *Reaching the Unreached.*
Newman, Randy; *Questioning Evangelism.*
Stiles, J. Mack; *Evangelism.*
Vanderstelt, Jeff; *Gospel Fluency.*

A17 SESSION 1. INTRODUCTIONS, THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

1. Arrival (5 minutes)

2. Personal introductions (10 minutes)
-Name, how long at SBCC
-What prompted you to say yes to this small group experience?

3. Syllabus review (10 minutes)
-Goals
-Course flow and relationship to readings
    -Next week: Demographic research
    -Following week: *True Story*; *Evangelism; Questioning Evangelism*
    -4th week: *Everyday Church, Reaching the Unreached, Gospel Fluency*

4. Group covenant (5 minutes)
-Read through, sign

5. History/self-assessment (15 minutes)
-Begin with self-assessment (5 minutes)
-Personal comfort with evangelism/history with the topic (group discussion)

6. Break (5 minutes)

7. Considering Acts 17 (25 minutes)
-Read passage, Acts 17:16-34
-If this text was all we knew about Paul, what would we learn about his approach to sharing the gospel?

Paul's approach marked by:
-Compassion (v. 16, "he was greatly distressed")
-Conviction (v.23, "what you worship as something unknown, I am going to proclaim to you")
-Creativity

Post-Christian world = very similar to the pre-Christian world
-Peyton Jones, *Reaching the Unreached*, "The reality is that the spiritual, philosophical, and societal climate that Paul and the apostles stepped into is not

all that different from the brave new world the church faces today. On a practical level, our post-Christian world is very much like the apostles' pre-Christian world, and if the challenges are the same, then so are the solutions."
-v. 26-27 = where we find ourselves in this, we can be the vehicle God uses to accomplish this purpose
-Our approach to culture needs to feature the same characteristics as Paul's

 Our five weeks are designed in exactly this flow
      -Demographics meant to grow our compassion
      -Gospel discussion increases our conviction
      -Mission discussion provokes our creativity

 <u>8. Overview of assignments for next week (5 minutes)</u>
-Get a newspaper/Noozhawk, circle or print 5 stories that point to a need in our community
      -Bring it with you next week
-Spend some time on city-data.com
      -What stands out to you about our city?
      -What surprises you?
-Begin praying for a specific individual you want to come to faith
-Keep a journal throughout the week
      -Specific to these topics
      -What are you noticing? How is God stretching you?

 <u>9. Prayer (10 minutes)</u>

A17 SESSION 2. (RE)DISCOVERING OUR CONTEXT

1. Arrival (5 minutes)

2. Checking In (20 minutes)
-What are you still thinking about from last week?
-Capture anything in your journal that you want to share?

3. (Re)discovering our Context (50 minutes)
-What did we learn or re-learn about our community? (Newspaper, city-data)
      -Acts 17, compassion (v. 16, "he was greatly distressed")
      -Francis Schaeffer, *2 Contents, 2 Realities*, "Christianity demands that we have enough compassion to learn the questions of our generation"

 -Imagine your work sends you on a one-year on-site assignment in a country you've never been to. How do you prepare?

The importance of reading our context
      -Biblical contextualization = the act of communicating the gospel in a way that makes sense to a particular listener or listeners
      -Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, "If the gospel is to be understood, if it is to be received as something which communicates truth about the real human situation, if it is, as we say, to 'make sense,' it has to be communicated in the language of those to whom it is addressed and has to be clothed in symbols which are meaningful to them."
         -Contextualization is critical and inevitable, but can't be done well apart from understanding the context
         -Think like church planters, cross-cultural workers
      -Timothy Keller, *Center Church*, "The first step in active contextualization is to understand and, as much as possible, identify with your listeners, the people you are trying to reach. This begins with a diligent (and never-ending) effort to become as fluent in their social, linguistic, and cultural reality as possible. It involves learning to express people's hopes, objections, fears, and beliefs so well that they feel as though they could not express them better themselves."

The Incarnation as contextualization
>-John 1:1-18
>>-What in these verses speaks of contextualization?
>-Hebrews 1:1-3; 2:9-18
>>-What in these verses speaks of contextualization?

The call to contextualization
>-Philippians 2:5-11
>>-Easy (and appropriate) to focus on Jesus' humility in these verses, but verse 5 indicates this is a call for believers to walk in his example of humility and contextualization for the sake of the gospel's message
>-2 Corinthians 5:16-21
>>-Ambassadors language assumes cross-cultural engagement
>-J.I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* "What is an ambassador? He is the authorized representative of a sovereign. He speaks not in his own name, but on behalf of the ruler whose deputy he is, and his whole duty and responsibility is to interpret that ruler's mind faithfully to those whom he is sent."

The possibilities of contextualization
>-Hebrews 4:15-16
>-Timothy Keller, *Center Church*, "When we contextualize faithfully and skillfully, we show people how the baseline 'cultural narratives' of their society can only find resolution and fulfillment in Jesus…Whatever these personal and cultural narratives may be, sound contextualization shows people how the plotlines of their lives can only find a happy ending in Christ."

 4. Syllabus and assignments for next time (5 minutes)
-Reading group reports: *True Story, Questioning Evangelism, Evangelism*
-Engage in a conversation with someone in your sphere whose story you don't know well and learn a bit about them
-Keep praying for your person
-Journal
>-What are you noticing? How is God stretching you?
>-Opportunities God is presenting

<u>5. Prayer (10 minutes)</u>

A17 SESSION 3. (RE)DISCOVERING THE GOSPEL

1. Arrival (5 minutes)

2. Checking In (20 minutes)
-What are you still thinking about from the last couple of weeks?
-Capture anything in your journal that you want to share?
-Conversation updates

3. What is the gospel? (50 minutes)
 -What are the irreducible elements of the "gospel"?
  -Brainstorm/white board activity
  -Muslim/Mormon/materialist test
-Reading group report: *True Story, Evangelism, Questioning Evangelism*
  -How were the readings helpful?
  -How did they push you?

4. Syllabus and assignments for next time (5 minutes)
-Reading group reports: *Everyday Church, Gospel Fluency, Reaching the Unreached*
-Engage in an intentional spiritual conversation with someone in your sphere.
  -Spiritual may be broadly interpreted, but not too broadly
  -Maybe engage around topics related to "the gospel" that we've talked about today
   -Timothy Keller, *Center Church*, "When we contextualize faithfully and skillfully, we show people how the baseline 'cultural narratives' of their society can only find resolution and fulfillment in Jesus…Whatever these personal and cultural narratives may be, sound contextualization shows people how the plotlines of their lives can only find a happy ending in Christ."
-Keep praying for your person
-Journal
  -What are you noticing? How is God stretching you?
  -Opportunities God is presenting

5. Prayer (10 minutes)

A17 SESSION 4. (RE)DISCOVERING THE MISSION

1. Arrival (5 minutes)

2. Checking In (20 minutes)
-What are you still thinking about from the last couple of weeks?
-Capture anything in your journal that you want to share?
-Conversation updates

3. Cultural Fluency (50 minutes)
-Reading group reports: *Everyday Church, Gospel Fluency, Reaching the Unreached*
        -How were the readings helpful?
        -How did they push you?

4. Syllabus and assignments for next time (5 minutes)
-Ask God to help you dream and pray about a specific mission innovation
        -Explore the idea w/ a trusted conversation partner, get feedback
-Reading supplement
        -Roxburgh and Boren
-Keep praying for your person
        -Look for opportunities to initiate conversation about spiritual topics
-Journal
        -What are you noticing? How is God stretching you?
        -Opportunities God is presenting

5. Prayer (10 minutes)

A17 SESSION 5. MISSIONAL MOMENTUM

 1. Arrival (5 minutes)

 2. Checking In (10 minutes)
-Conversation updates

 3. What is missional? (10 minutes)
-Acts 17:26-27
-Based on what we've learned about the message of the gospel and the place where we live, how might the gospel speak to the needs, longings, etc. of our unique time and location?

 4. Missional innovation (25 minutes)
-Respond to Roxburgh and Boren reading

 -What might it look like for us to own the specific mission in this specific place?
        -Take 5 minutes to write down your own ideas
 -Peyton Jones, "The first result of the Holy Spirit being poured out in power was to turn the church out on the streets. The apostles were immediately driven out of the upper room and into a public space with a capacity of thousands. Examine Acts closely. The entire book practically takes place outside. So do the gospels…We've been inviting God to join us inside, but God has been inviting us to join him in his work 'out there' for nearly two thousand years."

 5. Hospitality as a missional endeavor (15 minutes)

 6. Next steps (15 minutes)
-"Just try something"
-"We can fail, but we can't suck," *Canoeing the Mountains*
-Post-course self-assessment

 7. Prayer (10 minutes)

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